

**Transforming identities in Europe: Bulgaria and Macedonia  
between nationalism and Europeanization**

**Nevena Nancheva**

School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages

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# TRANSFORMING IDENTITIES IN EUROPE:

## BULGARIA AND MACEDONIA BETWEEN NATIONALISM AND EUROPEANIZATION

Nevena Nancheva

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
University of Westminster for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers an investigation of the discursive function of national identity in the project of European integration. Its focus is the discursive dynamics created in the context of European Union Enlargement to the former communist states, and its geographical locus is the Balkan region. Exploring the transformations of national identity narratives in two Balkan states – Bulgaria and Macedonia – the analysis aims to uncover the discursive mechanisms of accommodating national identity in the process of empowering Europeanization.

In the theoretical and meta-theoretical frame of poststructuralist discourse theory and within the structure of a small-number comparative case study, the investigation selects six narrative groups. They are centred around key elements in the narration of national identity: nationhood, territory, purpose, statehood, language, minorities. Traditionally interpreted within the hegemony of nationalism, these elements are identifiable in the national identity constructs of both of the studied states. Using qualitative methodology based on discourse analysis, the empirical study traces variations in these narratives in the course of the democratic transition and the preparation for EU membership at the macro level – the state. The purpose of the investigation is to reveal the logic of reading national identity within the empowering discourse of Europeanization.

The findings demonstrate that the discursive space of the European project upholds a positive, emancipatory, optimistic vision of national subjectivity. Marginalizing antagonistic interpretations of national identity narrated in the discourse of nationalism, Europeanization reveals the potential to significantly increase the credibility of national identity as a source of collective self-identification at the level of the state. This can stabilize the discursive space of European integration and ensure the political relevance of the European project. Where nationalist readings of identity succeed in challenging the hegemony of Europeanization, national identity appears more antagonistic and less compatible with the progress of integration in Europe. In this sense reading national identity emerges as the touchstone of the integration project.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVNOJ (from Serbian, Antifašističko Vijeće Narodnog Oslobođenja Jugoslavije) – Anti-Fascist Council of the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia

BTA – Bulgarian Telegraph Agency

EC – European Community

EU – European Union

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

UDF – Union of Democratic Forces

UMO-Ilinden PIRIN – United Macedonian Organization ‘Ilinden’ Party for Economic Development and Integration of the Population

VMRO – Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization

VMRO-DPMNE – Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

VMRO-SMD – Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Union of the Macedonian Associations

VMRO-Tatkovinsko – Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Tatkovinsko

VMRO-TMO ‘Ilinden’ - Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Traditional Macedonian Organization ‘Ilinden’

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work.

# **PART I**

# **CONCEPTS**

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION:

#### NATIONALISM, NATIONAL IDENTITY, AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

This dissertation offers an investigation of the discursive function of national identity in the project of European integration. It confronts an empirical puzzle continually troubling political scientists and practitioners working in the field of Europeanization: the perpetual salience of national identity narratives within the realm of European politics. Pointing to the national stories are discussions on the ‘crisis’ of legitimacy in the European Union<sup>1</sup>, the transforming norm of sovereignty<sup>2</sup>, the notion of community<sup>3</sup>, the rise of populist politics<sup>4</sup>. The puzzle arises from the seeming incompatibility between the divisive function of national identity and the non-antagonistic space of commonality which the European project claims to have created. Seeking to make sense of this puzzle, the dissertation explores national identity’s antagonistic potential to understand the recurrence of identity-based conflictuality. Particularly interested in the discursive space of ‘Europe’<sup>5</sup>, the analysis aims to investigate the mechanisms of accommodating national identity narratives within the discourse of Europeanization. This investigation has been inspired by the suggestion

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<sup>1</sup> Lene Hansen and Michael Williams, ‘The Myths of Europe: Legitimacy, Community and the ‘Crisis’ of the EU’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 37(2), (1999): 233-49.

<sup>2</sup> Rob Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), particularly Chapter VII and VIII.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Markus Thiel, *The Limits of Transnationalism: Collective Identities and EU Integration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), Jonathan White, *Political Allegiance after European Integration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), etc.

<sup>4</sup> Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde (eds.) *Uncivil Society? Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe* (London: Routledge, 2002), Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde, ‘The Two Sides of Euroscepticism: Party Positions on European Integration in East Central Europe’, *European Union Politics*, 3(3), (2002): 297-326.

<sup>5</sup> When used in inverted commas here, the term is meant to signify the Europeanization discourse.

that Europeanization can uphold national identity narratives in a reconciliatory manner, increasing their credibility as a source of collective self-identification with the state.

Suggesting a link between the European project and the possibility of avoiding identity-based antagonisms is, indeed, inspiring. The return of violence to the periphery of Europe – outside the realm of Europeanization – in the years following the end of the Cold War seemed to confirm this link. Indeed, against the unique achievements of European integration based on the moral superiority of liberal democracy<sup>6</sup> and supragovernmentalism, the ethno-national conflicts occurring in the Balkans and elsewhere in the former communist space looked inexplicable. In the immediate aftermath of events, abundant analytical output attempted to make sense of what was happening by reaching for the academic arsenal of Nationalism Studies and Area Studies<sup>7</sup>, ascribing the disturbing fact of ethnic cleansing<sup>8</sup> to cultural specificities of the people inhabiting the ends of Europe and to unfortunate string of events occurring in Europe's periphery.<sup>9</sup> The notion of 'national identity' quickly returned to the active academic (and political) vocabulary as pertaining to explanations in this vein.

This academic inertia is telling. Neither International Relations theory, nor European Studies, nor even the very sub-discipline of Nationalism Studies, could readily accommodate the concept of national identity in such a way as to account for its sudden 'recurrence' as a basis for conflictual politics: they were not equipped for this task either methodologically or conceptually. International relations theory, particularly in its realist

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<sup>6</sup> Liberal peace theory based on Kant's philosophy (Perpetual Peace) is an expression of this position. See Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), John M. Owen, 'How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace', *International Security*, 19 (2), (1994): 87-125, Christopher Lane, 'Kant or Cant: the Myth of the Democratic Peace', *International Security*, 19 (2), (1994): 5-49.

<sup>7</sup> In the context of violence in the Balkans, studies customarily summoned a 'Balkan civilization' whose historical peculiarities pre-determined the type of conflict, see Hugh Poulton, *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict* (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1991), Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London: Granta Publications 1999). For an analysis challenging this position, see Lene Hansen, 'Past as Preface: Civilizational Politics and the 'Third' Balkan War', *Journal of Peace Research* 37 (3), (2000): 345-362.

<sup>8</sup> Even though the term 'ethnic cleansing' was introduced into the vocabulary of international politics in the context of the early 1990s developments in Yugoslavia (from Serbo-Croatian), it does not describe a new phenomenon: for a useful overview, see Jennifer Jackson Preece, 'Ethnic Cleansing as an Instrument of Nation-State Creation: Changing State Practices and Evolving Legal Norms', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 20, (1998): 817-842.

<sup>9</sup> Very thorough in this analytical vein, Victor Roudometof, *Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy: the Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001).

mainstream, customarily focused on the system level, conceptualizing states as rational actors who aimed to maximize gains.<sup>10</sup> But the system level does not allow much room for analysis of the factors and actors at state and sub-state level which influence the international outcomes and play important roles in causing and understanding identity-based conflict. The assumption of rationality, too, excludes by default the powerful engine of identity-driven behaviour which lies in the heart of conflictual politics. In the sub-discipline of European Studies, which also developed on a solid rationalist mainstream<sup>11</sup>, integration was traditionally seen as a successful attempt to transcend identity-based controversies from the violent past by shifting the political attention to the rationality of mutual interest and gain. Peace was seen as a universally logical goal predicated on economic cooperation, not on the existence of a community of like-minded actors.<sup>12</sup> The notion of identity was thus ascribed to non-rational influences from the past which rational actors could eventually transcend in order to achieve their logical goals. In the Study of Nationalism the same idea suggested that a non-civic (hence, 'non-civilized'<sup>13</sup>) approach to politics led to the atrocious consequences of aggressive nationalism, thus marginalizing the phenomenon to certain communities and certain territories which customarily hosted conflict. The very language of Nationalism Studies suggests such marginalization: in its mainstream it discusses the phenomenon from a distance, either in time (as do post-war accounts of Nazi ideology<sup>14</sup>) or in space (as do Western analyses of identity-based conflicts occurring everywhere else but in Europe<sup>15</sup>). The Study of Nationalism thus failed to address those aspects of the phenomenon which made it relevant to the discursive construction of political realities – and to Europe's political present.

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<sup>10</sup> For reference to key realist positions on that, Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Ben Rosamond, *Theories of European Integration* (Basingstoke: St. Martin's Press, 2000), Chapter V.

<sup>12</sup> For a critical analysis on this assumption, see Michael Williams and Morten Kelstrup, 'Integration and the Politics of Community in the New Europe' in their edited volume *International Relations Theory and European Integration: Power, Security and Community* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1-14.

<sup>13</sup> The value-laden distinction between 'civic' nationalism as a signifier of civilizational progress and 'ethnic' nationalism as a signifier of backwardness will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

<sup>14</sup> In classical works for the discipline, nationalism is often analysed as a historical phenomenon incompatible with the rationality of the present, see Edward Hallett Carr, *Nationalism and After* (London: Macmillan, 1945).

<sup>15</sup> Even when they do occur in geographical Europe, they are relegated to its periphery: 'the New Europe', 'the former communist Europe', or more specifically 'the Balkans', etc.



But a more careful analysis of the discursive space of Europeanization reveals that the core of integrating Europe, just like Europe's periphery, has not been freed of national identity. Quite to the contrary, national identity narratives permeate the entire realm of European politics<sup>16</sup> and are visible around every key step in the integration process<sup>17</sup>. Minority-majority relations, as well as resistance to the deepening and widening of the integration project all together, are some of the most visible loci for national identity rhetoric. Its recurring political relevance suggests that approaching national identity in Europe from the distance of time and space is counter-productive. Therefore, a more accurate understanding of the role of national identity in European politics and the function of national identity narratives in the discursive realm of Europeanization is called for.

### ***Three Academic (Sub-)Disciplines on National Identity***

In the discipline of International Relations reflectivist-minded scholars have long begun to talk about how identity 'mattered'.<sup>18</sup> They quickly gained advantage over rationalist accounts of international politics which took identities as pre-given and never problematized them when analyzing the international game.<sup>19</sup> Initially taken up by constructivists, who conceptualized national identity as a factor in defining interests and thus conditioning behaviour<sup>20</sup>, in the discipline of International Relations the theme was further elaborated by postmodernists and critical writers, who argued that identity was much more than a factor in analyzing international politics. It was, rather, the framework within which politics occurred.<sup>21</sup> By fixing the meanings of political antagonisms ('us'

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<sup>16</sup> The volume on Euroscepticism by Robert Harmsen and Menno Spiering (eds.), *Euroscepticism: Party Politics, National Identity and European Integration* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi: 2004) offers an overview of the phenomena which illustrate this point.

<sup>17</sup> See for instance the argument put forward by Checkel on the way national governments are socialized into European norms on minority protection, Jeffrey Checkel, 'Norms, Institutions, and National Identity in Contemporary Europe', *International Studies Quarterly* 43 (1), (1999): 83-114.

<sup>18</sup> Wendt as a classic example: Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Their explanations operated at the systemic level (anarchy) and its constraints, see John Vasquez, 'Neorealism and the Power of Power Politics' in John Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: from Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 197-202

<sup>20</sup> Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Groundbreaking in the field of international relations theory, and particularly foreign policy analysis, has been David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis:

versus 'them'), identity established the very limits of the worlds actors inhabited. In European Studies interest towards the theme of an emerging 'European identity' increased and started intervening with traditional neofunctionalist and intergovernmentalist accounts of integration which explained the European project in purely rationalist terms.<sup>22</sup> Reflectivist approaches started showing how the normative space created by European integration interfered with national spaces, providing new meanings to categories of 'Self' and 'Other' and ultimately changing the boundaries of established collective identities.<sup>23</sup> In the field of Nationalism Studies contemporary approaches offered new insights into the place of national identity in the structure of the modern state system, which undermined mainstream views of nationalism as an extreme phenomenon only visible in times of extraordinary crises. Work appeared questioning the silently established division between 'good' patriotic nationalism and 'bad' ethnic nationalism<sup>24</sup>, and re-examining nationalism's conceptualization as a peripheral ideology of extremism. They provided convincing evidence that upholding nationalism as a state ideology legitimized on the basis of the Westphalian world order conditioned our thinking of the world of nations as the natural world.<sup>25</sup> It is in view of these ideas and in the cross-section of the (sub-)disciplines of International Relations, European Studies and Nationalism Studies that this dissertation analyses national identity in Europe.

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University of Minnesota Press, 1998), applied to a particular Balkan context (Bosnia) in his later David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity and Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Chapter II will further elaborate on this.

<sup>23</sup> Writings on those processes in the Nordic states: Hansen, Lene and Ole Wæver, *European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States* (Routledge: London and New York, 2002), Christine Ingebritsen and Susan Larson, 'Interest and Identity: Finland, Norway and European Union', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 32 (1997): 207-222.

<sup>24</sup> Established in the classical works in the field Carlton J.H. Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (New York, Richard R. Smith, 1931), Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning & History* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1955).

<sup>25</sup> Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (Sage: London, 1995), Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), Umut Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: a Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Palgrave, 2000).

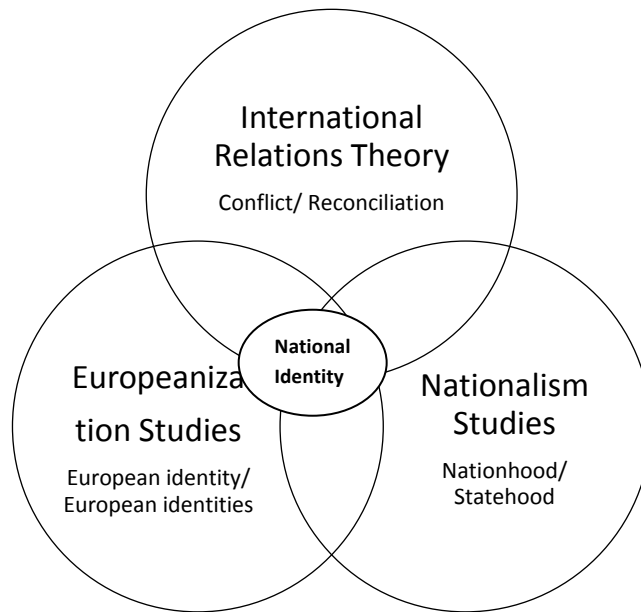


Figure 1. Research Problematique and Inter-Disciplinarity of the Dissertation.

### ***Discourse Theory and National Identity***

The conceptual and methodological frame of the analysis offered here is poststructuralist discourse theory. Transcending the limitations of rationalist accounts of national identity in politics, poststructuralist discourse theory offers stimulating analytical possibilities for fuller understanding of the political significance of national identity in European politics. By focusing on the systems of signification which condition the (re-)construction of social meaning, discourse theory demonstrates that identities emerge on the basis of excluding 'otherness'<sup>26</sup>. They are thus inherently divisive, necessarily relational, and contingent upon the dominant discursive systems. This conceptualization offers exciting new ways of approaching the above problematique.

Discourse theory sees national identity as upheld by the hegemony of the discourse of nationalism, which was conditioned by political outcomes in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe. National identity provided legitimacy to the organization of the political world into sovereign

<sup>26</sup> There is no other essence to subjectivity to be 'rescued' beyond its relational positioning towards what it excludes, argues Chantal Mouffe in her 'Citizenship and Political Identity', *The Identity in Question* 61 (Summer, 1992): 28-32, 28.

nation-states, interpreting state power as emanating from the nation<sup>27</sup>. As other identities in discourse, its emergence was made possible through discursive articulations of difference based on relations between various discursive elements. Within the discursive formation<sup>28</sup> of nationalism, difference was fixed along national borders. The 'Self'-'Other' dialectic (re-)produced upon these divisions served the purpose of determining and over-determining national identity but it also re-enforced the antagonistic potential of the divisions.<sup>29</sup> Since this political organization of the international system remained unchallenged over a long period of time, national identities were gradually stabilized to appear natural and fixed.

Discourse theory's ontological frame proves particularly relevant for the study of national identity for three reasons. First, it demonstrates national identity's contingent nature, addressing the inability of rationalist mainstream to explain its renewable salience. The assumption of contingency also reveals that national identities are not 'fixed' but are subject to re-negotiation and change, which addresses academic (and political, for that matter) uncertainty as to what to make of identity-based conflict.<sup>30</sup> Second, by conceptualizing meaning as relational, discourse theory suggests that the constitution of identity is necessarily dependent upon a constitutive 'Other'. This assumption offers an insight into the divisive potential of national identity. It also enables a fuller understanding of the logic of antagonization or reconciliation of national identities, depending on the particular interpretation of relations with the 'Other'. By uncovering the mechanisms for re-construction of identities, discourse theory offers a valuable perspective on identity change. Third, by explaining the dynamics of articulating meaning through social antagonisms and struggles for power, discourse theory directly links the construction of

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<sup>27</sup> 'Nation' here is used broadly to signify a community of people. Chapter II will focus in greater detail on how this community has been conceptualized.

<sup>28</sup> Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse' in Robert Young, *Untying the Text: a Post-Structuralist Reader* (London: Routledge, 1981), 48-78.

<sup>29</sup> In this sense the ultimately arbitrary construction of national borders in turn began to shape the construction of the identities they encapsulated. Thus we can talk of multi-dimensionality of borders, see for instance David Newman, 'The Lines that Continue to Separate Us: Borders in Our 'Borderless' World', *Progress in Human Geography* 30, 2 (2006): 143-161, David Newman, 'Borders and Bordering: towards an Interdisciplinary Dialogue', *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, 2 (2006): 171-186.

<sup>30</sup> It discredits the idea that particular nations are simply more prone to conflict than others and sheds light on the political struggles which antagonized them.

identities to the realm of the political. In this way it addresses the biggest puzzle of rationalist accounts: a persistent relevance of national identity to (all) politics.

Epistemologically, poststructuralist discourse theory also proves particularly suited for the analytical purposes of this dissertation, which investigates national identity change in the inter-section of three disciplines and from multiple perspectives. Conceptually drawing from a number of disciplines itself, discourse theory's methodological frame easily accommodates the model of inter-disciplinarity which this study operates in. Discourse theory's methodological emphasis on contextuality, on the other hand, permits approaching the object of analysis from various perspectives taking into account interactions on different levels, which promises a fuller understanding of the interpretation of national identity within the studied political contexts. This is what indicates the applicability of poststructuralist discourse theory as a unifying frame of this investigation.

### ***Nationalism and National Identity***

The general theme of this investigation is *conflictual* national identity: not nationalist *conflict*. The distinction is important both in view of the basic conceptual assumptions of the study and of its research goals. As a fundamental self-identification category linking the individual to sovereign power, national identity constructed in a conflictual fashion can be extremely dangerous. The necessary boundaries it demarcates between collective 'Self' and 'Other' become loaded with antagonistic potential, which leads directly to exclusion, the rhetoric of submission-domination, and violence. At the same time, the discursive construction of identity and the socio-cognitive process of self-identification do require the demarcation of boundaries between 'Self' and 'Other' and condition their inherent opposition. Thus, even in its most benign and inclusive formulations, national identity pre-supposes the exclusion of an 'Other'. This ever-present opposition precisely is what suggests national identity's conflictual potential. It also makes national identity narratives relevant to even the most peaceful of nations.

Nationalist discourses thrive on national identity narratives. The systems of meanings they uphold are organized around stories of the nation. Relating key social categories to the story of the nation – interest, justice, legality, culture, custom – nationalist discourses link the social realm to individual experiences, making these categories familiar and intelligible. It is this ability of nationalist discourses to translate the foreign into the private which determines their powerful populist potential. Sustained by the institutionalized division of our political world into nation-states, it makes discourses of nationalism the habitual discursive space for the operation of politics.<sup>31</sup>

This is why the dissertation did not select as its case studies states which have actually come into open conflict. They would have offered, indeed, extreme cases of nationalism. The investigation is interested instead in the conflictual potential of what Billig called ‘banal’ nationalism: the nationalism of everyday politics which is not even called ‘nationalism’ for it has been taken for granted ‘by every citizen of every state in the world’<sup>32</sup>. As Billig observes in the introduction to his study, gaps in political language are rarely innocent and ‘banal’ does not necessarily mean ‘benign.’<sup>33</sup> Even though unnoticeable, this type of nationalism carries its conflictual potential and, given the circumstances, could politicize national identity and place it back on the security agenda of the state. This type of nationalism is implicitly propagated by every politician who speaks of the interests of ‘the nation’, claiming to act in its name. It is precisely the taken-for-granted quality, the ‘banality’ of this political rhetoric that provokes interest in it.

Taken up by students of contemporary Nationalism such as Craig Calhoun<sup>34</sup> and Umut Özkırımlı<sup>35</sup>, this conceptualization has removed nationalism from the periphery of modern politics and placed it in its centre. Nationalism is not studied here as the exception to the rule. It is analyzed, quite to the contrary, as an integral element to politics, the fundament which enables the functioning of the modern state system. The division into national territories separated by borders, the assumption that they designate self-governed,

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<sup>31</sup> This thesis is elaborately presented by Michael Billig in his *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE, 1995).

<sup>32</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>34</sup> Calhoun, *Nationalism*.

<sup>35</sup> Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, also Umut Özkırımlı, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: a Critical Engagement* (Oxford, Palgrave, 2005).

internationally recognized living spaces of clearly defined nations, the significance of symbols of belonging such as national flags, anthems, emblems and names, the very language we use to speak of political events<sup>36</sup>, re-produce nationalist discourses in all defining features of political life, making them integral to our understanding of the world. This is why studying their powerful potential to antagonize national identities in everyday politics is essential to our understanding of politics but is also essential to understanding nationalist conflict. Exploring the mechanisms of neutralizing this potential, on the other hand, can prove indispensable to avoiding it.

### ***Europeanization and National Identity***

Unlike other social identities, national identity links the personal not simply to a social group but to the very organization of the political world, thus re-enforcing in a categorical manner its fundamental quality as source of collective self-identification. National identity also links the present to a story of shared past, positioning the individual as participant in a meaningful plot spanning through history and time. Attached to particular political and historical contexts, social subjects find themselves 'entrapped' within the boundaries of discourses upholding their stories of national identity. They are unable to challenge the discursive hegemony of nationalism from within. This is how national identity narratives begin to sediment and be taken for granted. Their intertwinement with the division of the political world into nation-states justifies this condition.

The project of European integration was the first legitimate challenge in Europe's modern history to the inevitability of this politico-legal organization. Born out of the horror of the worst international conflict the world had seen and the firm will to prevent its return to Europe, European integration was initially launched precisely as a pragmatic way to appease conflictual national identities. Devising a plan for mutual economic interdependence, it meant to reconcile defeated Germany with its neighbours by engaging

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<sup>36</sup> Personifying states by using their capital names as actors, the presumption of an existing 'we' as opposed to a clear 'they' in public addresses, etc., as Billig, *Nationalism*, 46, 105 points out.

them into a common decision-making procedure and tangible economic bonds.<sup>37</sup> Modifying the notion of sovereignty in significant ways, the project created a form of supra-national government which shifted the focus of state politics, for the first time, from the national to the supra-national space (Figure 2). This inevitably affected the stories of national identity told in the participating states by transforming the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic these stories (re-)produced. Its focus shifted beyond the boundaries of the nation-state traditionally separating the collective national 'Self' from 'Other(s)', and delineated a space of commonality between several nation-states. National identity narratives began to transform in order to make allowance for the states' new roles in the Communities. The processes of Europeanization gradually generated a powerful discourse capable of accommodating many of the meanings articulated through national identity narratives, which had traditionally been sustained by the discourse of nationalism.<sup>38</sup> This created the conditions of possibility for hegemonic empowerment of the former and partial dislocation of the latter.

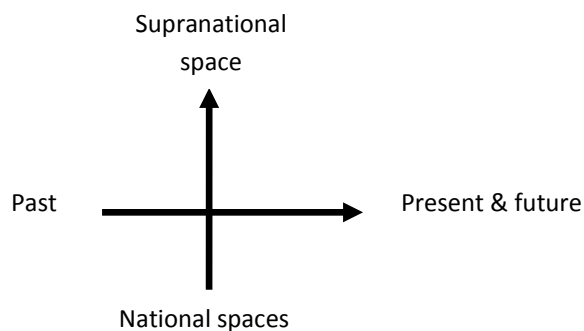


Figure 2. Dynamics of Europeanization: Spatial and Temporal Shifts.

The Europeanization project also implied another important political shift: it was designed to enable transcending national antagonisms of the past by harnessing political effort in the present and for the future. It emphasized the possibilities offered by the present and in the future, unlike nationalism which focused on past dependencies. Europeanization

<sup>37</sup> See historical overview and legal basis of the European Community at [http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm) and <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/index.htm#founding>.

<sup>38</sup> Membership in the Community meant being part of a unique identity on the international arena (Art.B of the Treaty on European Union), while at the same time the project provided institutional mechanisms which ensured that national identities of the member states were 'respected' (Art.F of the Treaty on European Union).



discourse enabled the gradual depoliticization of historically determined antagonisms, which allowed their removal from the immediate political agenda of the state to the benefit of pragmatic politics and material interpretations of national interest.

As its focus was in the future, Europeanization did not offer alternative interpretations of the past. It was therefore unable to challenge the powerful interpretations of nationalism. They remained part of the discursive spaces of national politics as elements of the national identity narratives. Every key step in the process of Europeanization continued to be influenced by them because it called for a renewed interpretation of the national interest, attached to narratives of identity: what we want is integral to who we are<sup>39</sup>. This is what prevented the dislocation of the discourse of nationalism from the discursive space of Europe. On the one hand, it remained always already relevant as interpreting part of the national story – the past. On the other hand, its deeply sedimented meanings were difficult to supplant by the novel interpretations of Europeanization. In times of crisis, national identity narratives in Europe can still all too easily revert back to conflictual interpretations of nationalism, despite their partial engagement by the European integration discourse.<sup>40</sup> This is what stimulated the dissertation's interest in exploring the mechanism of interaction between the discourse of nationalism and the discourse of Europeanization on interpretations of national identity narratives. This mechanism, it seems, is key to understanding the place of national identity in the European project, the dynamics of Europeanization, as well as the role of nationalism in it. It is what this dissertation sets out to investigate.

### ***Why Study Conflictual National Identity in 'Europe' from the***

### ***Periphery of Europe?***

Discourses of nationalism and of Europeanization uphold national identity in profoundly different ways. Nationalism re-enforces difference along national lines while

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<sup>39</sup> This is a classical constructivist thesis: a useful summary and references to key texts offers Michael Barnett in his chapter on Social Constructivism in John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics: an Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 163.

<sup>40</sup> The ongoing discussion on how the current Euro crisis can be harnessed showcases precisely this dynamics.

Europeanization shifts its focus beyond them. Nationalism emphasizes the past while Europeanization focuses on the present and the future. The inevitable tension between the two grand discourses comes from their different foci in time and space, conditioning perpetual undecideability between the two. The largely successful course of European integration for the first decades of its lifetime significantly empowered and stabilized Europeanization discourse. But every new step towards deepening and widening integration required re-articulation of the central meanings upholding the discourse, which temporarily challenged its stability. In times of change, the ever-recurring relevance of nationalism unremittingly threatened the hegemony of Europeanization. The discursive power of nationalism came from its interpretation of national identity narratives, whose central elements – purpose, interest, role, responsibility – were also signifiers of Europeanization.

No greater change had confronted the logic of Europeanization than the fall of the 'Iron Curtain' in Europe and the prospect of enlargement towards the former communist space. A major new phase of integration (marked significantly by the establishment of the European Union in 1992) caught up with the prospect of enlargement (marked by the former communist states' ambitions to (re-)turn to Europe) and created a context of utmost uncertainty for the future of the European project.<sup>41</sup>

The uncertainty was caused not only by the technical difficulties in re-writing the founding institutional framework, evidenced by the consistent attempts for legislative reform of the Amsterdam Treaty (1997), the Nice Treaty (2001), the abandoned project for a Constitutional Treaty (2004) and the subsequent Lisbon Treaty (2007). Uncertainty was also caused by the fact that the candidate states were so different from the core members. Yes, Europe had admitted before states emerging out of democratic transitions during the so called Southern Enlargement to Spain and Portugal. But it had never admitted states which were undergoing such fundamental processes of complex transition not only to

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<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Didier Bigo, 'When Two Become One: Internal and External Securitisations in Europe' in Michael Williams and Morten Kelstrup (eds.) *International Relations Theory and European Integration: Power, Security and Community* (London: Routledge, 2000), 171-205

democracy, but also to market economy, to consolidating statehood and to re-thinking nationhood.<sup>42</sup> Nor had it ever enlarged to such a large number of states at a time.

The task of dealing with difference proved a difficult one for the Europeanization discourse. Unable to readily accommodate it within its discursive boundaries without major re-writing of its founding texts, it saw its 'hegemony' challenged from within, as well as from without. On the one hand, the stable attachment of the notion of integration to the overall benefits from it came under question. Divergent interpretations of the signifiers of national interest in the different member states began to detach from the discourse of Europeanization. They became available, 'floating'<sup>43</sup>, which enabled competing articulations of meaning, significantly within the discourse of nationalism which traditionally dominated the interpretation of national interest. On the other hand, the community of nations which the Europeanization project claimed to represent was challenged from outside its borders. The emergence of its previous 'Other(s)', the 'non-European' part of Europe, as prospective members dramatically contested the image of the European 'Self(ves)'. This put additional stress on the relation between the idea of integration and the formulations of national interest, and shifted political focus back to the well established 'Self'-'Other' boundary demarcated by national spaces, thus re-enforcing nationalist discourse. It also brought forward the debate on the future course of integration, problematizing many aspects of it.<sup>44</sup>

Empowered by these changes, nationalism re-appeared as a political agenda. Though often implicitly, it challenged the hegemony of the European discourse and threatened to dislocate it, if it did not manage to accommodate the new interpretations of the key

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<sup>42</sup> On the complexity of the transitions in South-Eastern Europe see the theses of 'triple' (Claus Offe, 'Capitalism by Democratic Design?' *Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transition in East Central Europe*, *Social Research* 58(4), (1991): 865-881) and 'quadruple' transitions (Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)), also Taras Kuzio, 'Transition in Post-Communist States: Triple or Quadruple?' in *Politics* 21(3), (2001): 168-177.

<sup>43</sup> In the term established by Claude Lévi-Strauss, see Jeffrey Mehlman, 'The "Floating Signifier": from Lévi-Strauss to Lacan', *Yale French Studies* 48 (1972): 10-37.

<sup>44</sup> Divergent visions of 'Europe' in effect questioned normative aspects of the integration process which had not been completely stabilized discursively, see Marchus Jachtenfuchs, Thomas Diez and Sabine Jung, 'Which Europe? Conflicting Models of a European Political Order', *European Journal of International Relations* 4 (4), (1998): 409-445.

signifiers of role, purpose, responsibility, interest, within its contours.<sup>45</sup> This prompted re-thinking of the original idea of integration in light of the new political realities. The failed ratification of the Constitutional Treaty (2005) is evidence for the 'soul-searching' which accompanied this process. So, it was from the periphery of Europe that the successful accommodation of conflictual national identity was challenged. It is of key importance then to analyse the way Europe relates to its periphery in view of articulating national identity, in order to fully understand the current dynamics of European integration and the sense of belonging to and participation in the European project of the individual states.

### ***National Identity Narratives in Bulgarian-Macedonian Relations***

Motivated by the belief that the way Europe deals with its former 'Other(s)' can become the touchstone of the European project, this study investigates Europeanization in the Balkans, a region habitually thought of as the periphery of Europe.<sup>46</sup> It explores the transformations of (conflictual) national identity narratives in Bulgaria and Macedonia. It is specifically interested in the way conflictuality evolves along the lines of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations during the process of empowering the 'Europe'<sup>47</sup> discourse in the two states. Structured by nationalist interpretations of national identity deeply sedimented in dominant historical narratives in both states, Bulgaria and Macedonia experienced a type of cold conflict which completely blocked their relations for the best part of the 1990s. Formulating their desire to become part of the European space as an

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<sup>45</sup> The term of dislocation is used here as per Laclau and Mouffe's notion, central to their conceptualization of hegemony, see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).

<sup>46</sup> The assumption of 'core' and 'periphery' within Europe is not novel. Taking up an element of Wallerstein's 'World-System Theory' and postulating a driving 'North' and a lagging 'South' as the European integration fault line, it has been extensively theorized in economic, security, and other aspects of Europeanization Studies. See Martin Rhodes (ed.), *The Regions and the New Europe: Patterns in Core and Periphery Development* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), also Ole Wæver, 'Aberystwyth, Paris, Copenhagen. New 'Schools' in Security Theory and their Origins between Core and Periphery', paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association (Montreal: 17th March 2004), etc. The divisions between 'core' and 'periphery' in Europe is visible again in the current fiscal crisis, when the 'South' is seen as failing and in need of assistance, whereas the North-West is portrayed as arrogant and restrictive.

<sup>47</sup> 'Europe' used here to designate the discourse upheld by the idea of the common European home which lies in the heart of the integration process. It therefore is directly linked to the process of Europeanization (narrowly defined as EU-ization) and will be used interchangeably with it henceforward in this study.

overall strategic goal, however, the two states subscribed to the 'Europe' discourse and enabled gradual marginalization of conflictual interpretations of identity perpetuated by nationalism's hegemony. In this sense they showcase *the interaction between discourses of nationalism and of Europeanization in their interpretations of national identity*. This is the principal subject of this study. Exploring this interaction in the two case studies, the dissertation aims to uncover the discursive mechanisms of reading national identity by comparing and contrasting key elements of it displayed in the two states.

Looking at national identity narratives, the analysis operates *at the level of the state*. It conceptualizes national identity as a source of collective self-identification at state level, even though 'nation' and 'state' signify different things.<sup>48</sup> The constitutive role of nationalist discourse in the construction of the modern international system justifies such conceptualization. Traditionally, national/state identity has been upheld primarily by the nationhood narratives. In this sense, the stories of the collective national 'Self' as opposed to the national 'Other(s)' have been realigned with narratives of statehood, re-enforcing the divisive role of state borders between different national spaces. European integration challenged this realignment by transforming the purpose and role of state borders. But calling into question the boundaries between different national spaces, Europeanization in effect increased the political relevance of the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic along national lines – by placing it back on the current political agenda. This politicization emphasized the divisive potential of national identity and uncovered the inherent tension between the grand discourses of nationalism and of Europeanization in its interpretation. The outcome of this tension, as will be argued here, has the potential to ultimately determine the course and dynamics of the integration project. This dissertation suggests that the progress of European integration depends on the credible reading of national identity narratives.

By exploring the transformations of national identity narratives structuring bilateral relations between Bulgaria and Macedonia in the course of Europeanization, the analysis sets out to establish the place and the function of national identity in the discursive space of 'Europe'. What it observed is reduced conflictuality of national identity narratives linked

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<sup>48</sup> More will be said on this in Chapter II.

to establishing a discursive space of commonality over the two formerly conflictual national spaces. This observation suggested two things. First, that Europeanization has the potential to re-tell the national stories in a reconciliatory manner, marginalizing conflictuality as an illegitimate political strategy. Second, that in doing so, Europeanization ensures its own political relevance as a hegemonic discourse. The task of this study is to explore these suggestions by uncovering the mechanisms of accommodation of national identity narratives within the discourse of Europeanization. This research goal has been motivated by an analytical interest in the possibility of transcending identity-based conflictuality in Europe, which could ultimately determine the future of the integration project.

### ***National Identity Narratives and the Hegemonic Struggle between Nationalism and Europeanization***

Despite the perception of 'return'<sup>49</sup> of national identity to European politics after the break-up of communism, narratives of national identity never left Europe's discursive space. As noted above, European integration was originally conceived as a means to reconciling conflictual national identities antagonized by aggressive nationalism. Conflictual interpretations of national identity upheld by nationalist discourse had caused two world wars and had profoundly compromised nationalism as an ideology of the state. European integration was thought up to provide an alternative. It captured key signifiers from the national identity narratives and positioned them into a new context, re-interpreting their contents. The foundation of this new context was shared national interest: a key element in the construction of national identity. Initially viewed as purely economic and limited to integrating three specific industries, it gradually evolved into other areas such as the single market<sup>50</sup>, justice and home affairs<sup>51</sup>, border control<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> This is the context which national identity was habitually placed in as an object of academic enquiry in the early post-communist years, particularly against the background of ethno-national conflict in the disintegrating Soviet and Yugoslav federations, see Ted R. Gurr, 'Peoples against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World-System', *International Studies Quarterly* 38(3), (1994): 347–77.

<sup>50</sup> With the Single European Act in 1986.

Pursuing shared interest re-produced the similarities which it had been based on and gradually created a space of commonality marked by common institutions, norms and practices. Their operation articulated unified meanings attached to social reality, bringing closer together narratives of national identity of the participating states. The establishment of the common space, therefore, re-formulated categories of 'Self' and 'Other' at state level. It opened up national spaces to non-members, emphasizing commonality of identity, which gradually re-defined the meaning of 'otherness'. Upholding more inclusive narratives of national identity, European integration pushed the boundary between 'Self' and 'Other(s)' beyond the limits of the national spaces towards the borders of the Community. With its coming into being, however, this common discursive space challenged existing notions of nationhood and statehood.

On the one hand, it problematized the limits of the national space. No longer demarcated by state borders, its delimitation became much more arbitrary. Facilitating everyday interaction between different national identities at state level did help normalize the presence of 'otherness', while the pursuit of common interest marginalized identity differences and reproduced identity similarities. But at the same time this dynamics subverted established national identities precisely because it blurred the boundaries separating them. This prompted re-thinking of national identity narratives, bringing them back to the political agenda, in the meanwhile re-activating nationalist discourse which had traditionally upheld them. This outcome was also greatly facilitated by the political interpretation of the common European space as upholding a common European identity antagonistic to national identity. The subversive effects of such interpretation on the future of integration are illustrated by the emerged platform of euro-scepticism. Propagated by movements and political parties from all EU member states, it instrumentalized the notion of national interest to call for securitization<sup>53</sup> of national identity and justify anti-integrationist policies. Britain's reluctance, for instance, to commit

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<sup>51</sup> Initiated as early as 1975 with the TREVI forum established at the European Council summit in Rome, which evolved into the Maastricht's Union pillar of Justice and Home Affairs.

<sup>52</sup> Cooperation started in 1985 with the signing of the Schengen agreement, which was later to be incorporated into the *acquis communautaire* with the Amsterdam Treaty.

<sup>53</sup> In the conceptualization of the Copenhagen School, see Barry Buzan et al., *Security: a New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

to major communitarian undertakings could be defeated only through creative articulations of 'Britishness' and assurances that this would be given priority along every step of the integration process.<sup>54</sup> Conflictually positioning European identity against national identity only re-enforced the political precedence of the latter, thus destabilizing the discourse of Europeanization upholding the emerging European identity. This created the conditions of possibility for a renewed hegemony of the discourse of nationalism.

On the other hand, the common discursive space created by European integration challenged traditional notions of statehood. Unlike other regional organizations, the European Community (later the European Union) was referenced<sup>55</sup> by identity markers similar to those characteristic of a state. Most prominently, they included *sovereignty* in certain areas (specified by the states and transferred by them to the Community), *common borders* (demarcated by the territories of an increasing number of participating states), *legislation* (which had supremacy over national legislations and was directly applicable in the national legislative space). In this sense the supranational structure established by the integration project took over important functions of the state and carried them out at the supra-national<sup>56</sup> level. This posed a challenge to the Westphalian international order guaranteeing the sacrosanctity of state sovereignty<sup>57</sup>. And because modern statehood had traditionally been organized on the basis of nationhood, supranational government also problematized narratives of nationhood, whose embeddedness in the discourse of nationalism renewed its political relevance.

The above reveals the basis of the inherent tension between the grand discourses of nationalism and of Europeanization, generated by their divergent interpretations of national identity. The prospect of enlargement of the European Community to the former communist states dramatically increased this tension. Faced with the task of having to

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<sup>54</sup> John Major's speeches on ratification of the Maastricht Treaty are an example par excellence, see for instance John Major, Commons Statement on the Maastricht Treaty – Social Policy Protocol (made in the House of Commons on 22nd Jul 1993), <http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page1302.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Identity as a 'frame of reference', Yves Surel, 'The Role of Cognitive and Normative Frames in Policy-Making', *Journal of European Public Policy* 7 (4), (2000): 495-512 on the role of normative and cognitive frames in policy-making.

<sup>56</sup> I.e. supra-state level.

<sup>57</sup> For references, e.g. Andreas Osiander, 'Sovereignty, International Relations and the Westphalian Myth', *International Organization* 55, (2001): 251-287.



accommodate its previous 'Other(s)', European political space saw a resurgence of nationalist rhetoric. At the same time the normative fundament of European integration interpreted enlargement as an imperative. This represented a major test to the stability of the Europeanization project as it required re-writing of the founding treaties and triggered a process of re-thinking of key signifiers of the Europeanization discourse: 'interest', 'purpose', 'responsibility', 'Self', 'Other'. This complex re-arrangement exposed the original logic of accommodation of national identity into the Europeanization project, revealing the delicate balance which had been found between commonality and difference in Europe. The renewed political salience of nationalist interpretations of identity threatened this balance by securitizing difference<sup>58</sup> and increasing national identities' conflictuality. Therefore, the discursive stability and the political relevance of the project of European integration depends very much on its 'reading' and re-interpreting of national identity narratives and accommodating them in the common discursive space of 'Europe'. A credible reading of national identity can restore the balance between commonality and difference within the discursive contours of 'Europe' and stabilize them. Having accounted for the empowerment of the discourse of Europeanization in the first decades of integration, this can also determine its prospective hegemony or marginalization (and eventual dislocation) in favour of nationalism. European Union's enlargement towards the former communist space offers a context for investigating these problems.

### ***The Logic of Reading National Identity within the Discourse of 'Europe'***

The central claim of this study has been formulated on the basis of the above assumptions. Empowering the discourse of Europeanization has the potential to offer a credible reading of national identity. By modifying the meaning of central identity signifiers, Europeanization can accommodate national identity narratives in a reconciliatory manner, upholding an optimistic, emancipatory vision of the national 'Self'. The discursive space of commonality which Europeanization upholds interprets national identity in inclusive terms, decreasing the relevance of national/state borders as divisive lines between 'Self' and

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<sup>58</sup> The term implies 'problematizing' and placing on the political agenda.

‘Other’ and transcending the limits of past dependency. Europeanization interprets the national ‘Self’ in a positive, self-enhancing manner as belonging to a supra-national community focused on the optimistic possibilities of the future. It thus enables the marginalization of conflictual interpretations of identity, which in turn re-enforces the discursive hegemony of ‘Europe’ as a grand discourse and ensures the political relevance of integration. The discursive logic of interaction between the divergent readings of national identity can be seen as linear (Figure 3).

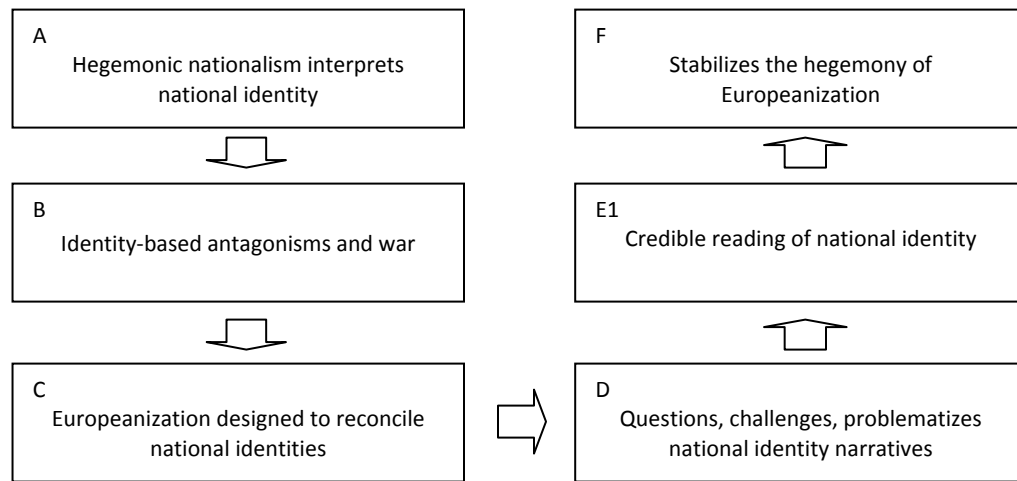


Figure 3. Nationalism, Europeanization, and Reading National Identity – Logic 1.

The first three stages (A to B, B to C, C to D) of the process suggested in Figure 3 are illustrative of the historical evolution of the European project. The fourth stage (D to E1) describes an ongoing condition which has not yet been stabilized. It is hypothetical and suggests one possible outcome (E1), which can ensure the progress of the integration project.

Should Europeanization discourse fail to offer a credible reading of national identities narratives, it could become vulnerable to dislocation. National identities’ inherent divisiveness could be re-enforced by traditional nationalist interpretations, which could renew the political relevance of the discourse of nationalism and could lead to discursive marginalization of Europeanization. This logic suggests that the interaction between the

discourse of Europeanization and the discourse of nationalism can also be of a circular kind, as illustrated in Figure 4.

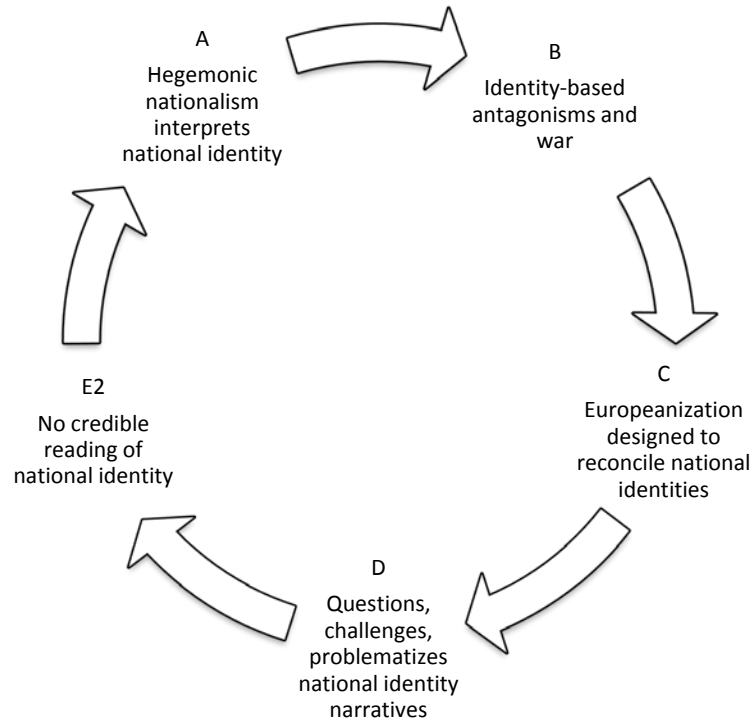


Figure 4. Nationalism, Europeanization and Reading National Identity – Logic 2.

The first three stages (A to B, B to C, C to D) of the cycle suggested in Figure 4 are the same as described in Figure 3. The fourth stage (D to E2) is also hypothetical. It should occur if Europeanization fails to provide a credible reading of national identity narratives. This outcome could lead to renewed political relevance of the discourse of nationalism, traditionally dominant in interpreting national identity, which could seriously destabilize the discursive power of 'Europe'. Should the Europeanization discourse be successfully dislocated, then going back to the beginning of the cycle (A to B) would be highly problematic because the historical constellation which enabled it originally could not repeat itself.

These logics take us back to the relevance of the subject of study and research goals of this dissertation. An analytical interest in the process of transcending identity-based antagonisms in Europe and the future of integration leads to investigating the readings of

national identity within the discourse of Europeanization. Exploring Europeanization's mechanism of capturing central identity signifiers from the discourse of nationalism and re-articulating their contents opens an analytical avenue for assessing its potential to offer a credible reading of national identity. It also uncovers the inability of nationalist discourse to uphold non-antagonistic politics, thus pointing to the political advantages of Europeanization's hegemony as a grand discourse. Understanding national identity accommodation within Europeanization, therefore, promises to reveal a lot about the future of both nationalism and Europeanization in Europe. Studying the discursive mechanisms of accommodation of national identity narratives from Europe's periphery showcases the hegemonic struggle between the two grand discourses in a region – the Balkans – which in the post-communist period witnessed empowering both. Selecting identity narratives from two largely peaceful Balkan states – Bulgaria and Macedonia – reflects the understanding that nationalist discourse needn't have culminated in war to be politically unsettling. Its divisive potential can antagonize politics even when it takes place in formal international peace. Investigating the discursive effects of Europeanization discourse therefore also promises to shed more light on the functioning of European politics as an enterprise of the European national states.

### ***Analytical Plan of the Dissertation***

In setting out to do this, this dissertation is divided in two main parts. Beside the introductory chapter, Part I contains three further chapters laying out the theoretical and meta-theoretical framework of the analysis. Part II is also made up of four chapters presenting the empirical investigation and its findings. The final part of the dissertation contains the concluding chapter which aims to apply the analytical argument to the empirical outcomes, summarize and synthesize the achieved, and point to the future research agenda which this analysis opens.

Chapter II takes up the key concepts which the analysis works with – national identity, nationalism, Europeanization, conflict and reconciliation, political change. It looks to see how they have been theorized in relevant academic literature and to establish where the

current investigation stands in relation to existing academic work. Positioning poststructuralist discourse theory as the analytical frame promising fuller understanding of national identity and its centrality in the European project, Chapter II fixes the main reference points which sustain the conceptual scaffolding of the dissertation.

Building upon these, Chapter III unfolds the central claim of this study within the unifying frame of discourse theory. It starts by laying out the key tenets of discourse theory which have been operationalized into the analysis, and proceeds to highlight the advantages – as compared to other more traditional perspectives – which make it a suitable approach to the studied problematique. The chapter then demonstrates how discourse theory is applied to develop the specific argumentative structure of the dissertation. The final section of this chapter focuses on the novelty of the particular approach adopted in the investigation and its key research contributions.

Chapter IV presents the methodological skeleton of the dissertation. Its purpose is to clarify the methodological steps which enabled the investigation. It discusses the advantages of comparative analysis, the analytical basis upon which the case studies have been selected, and the comparability of the cases they offer. The chapter then introduces discourse analysis as the key methodological tool of the analysis, offers justification of the research design of the investigation carried out, and explains the methods used to collect and select empirical data and to compare and contrast the findings.

Chapter V is the first from the empirical part of the dissertation. Its purpose is to map out the discursive contexts which structured the studied cases – the selected narrative units – at the beginning of the analysed period. The chapter discusses the specific historical constellation which re-activated nationalism as hegemonic discourse but also points to the political conditions which challenged this hegemony and opened its discursive space to alternative – ‘European’ – interpretations. On the one hand this chapter relates to the building of the argument and the justification of the research cases: it presents the hegemonic struggle between two grand discourses over the meaning of a central discursive element – national identity. On the other hand Chapter V relates to the empirical investigation because it presents the dominant discursive contexts which shaped

the meaning of the studied narratives. In this sense the chapter functions as the link between the two parts of the dissertation.

Chapter VI, VII and VIII contain the empirical investigation. The analysis selects six narrative units as its cases and explores their modifications in the two case studies over the specified timeframe. The narrative units are selected on the basis of their salience: they are narrative groups containing key stories of national identity told at the level of the state, and are identifiable in both states. Conceptualizing the identity building dynamics as discursively positioning the collective national 'Self' against 'otherness', the analysis conditionally splits it in two narrative streams: narratives predominantly occupied with determining the discursive position of 'Self', and narratives predominantly focused on determining the discursive position of 'Other'. Fixing their meanings in the perpetual over-determination of subject positions, these two narrative streams produce the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic which upholds collective identities. On the basis of these assumptions, the investigation selects three narratives of the first type and three narratives of the second type. The narratives of 'Self' are thought of as more stable and less prone to modification, which is why they are studied over a longer period of time. They are investigated in Chapter VI – at the beginning of transition – and in Chapter VIII – towards the end of transition. The comparative analysis of the two case studies helps highlight and understand the identified modifications within the narrative units. The narratives of 'Other' are more dependent on the political factors which condition state behaviour – such as intensified relations with a particular state or group of states. This is why they are analyzed in the context of bilateral relations and in the chronological sequence in which they gain prominence. The analysis traces modification within and across the unit, before moving on to the next narrative group. Since they follow the chronological evolution of bilateral relations, these narratives have been grouped together in one chapter – Chapter VII.

Having identified modifications in the studied narratives, the analysis summarizes them and synthesizes them in order to draw conclusions. Applying the analytical frame of the investigation to the findings, Chapter IX aims to demonstrate how these findings relate to the central argument: Europeanization has the potential to offer a credible reading of national identity narratives, which can stabilize the discursive hegemony established with

the project of European integration by transforming the divisive function of national identity in European politics. The chapter concludes by highlighting the original research contributions of the dissertation as an outcome of the completed analytical and empirical work, and pointing to their possible application to future research.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND DEFINITIONS:

#### NATIONAL IDENTITY CHANGE IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONALISM AND EUROPEANIZATION

This dissertation offers an inter-disciplinary approach to investigating the place of national identity in Europe and understanding the discursive dynamics of identity change, examining a particular aspect of Balkan politics. It operates at the intersection of the study of International Relations, Nationalism Studies and European Studies, determined by their interest in national identity. National identity is thus the pivotal point of the analysis, organized around which are the other key concepts: nationalism, Europeanization, conflict, reconciliation, change (Figure 5).

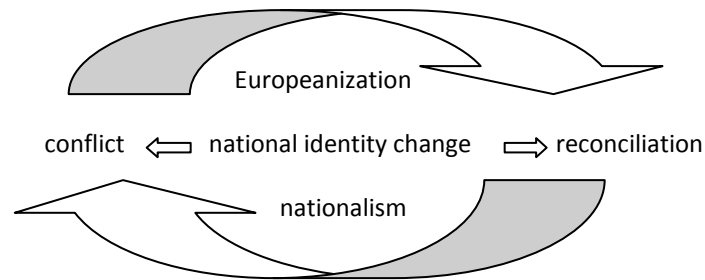


Figure 5. Studying National Identity in Context: Key Concepts.

The purpose of this chapter is to review academic literature on national identity in Europe and the questions it raises, as well as to lay out the definitional framework for the concepts of nationalism and Europeanization and the way they have been academically approached so far. Highlighting theoretical possibilities and limitations in existing research, the chapter presents this dissertation's conceptualization of national identity. Thinking



about national identity from a discourse theoretical perspective reveals the process of identity change in Europe as a struggle between the hegemonic discourses of nationalism and Europeanization. The dominant meanings eventually attached to the narratives of identity within the discursive system determine national identity's coordinates along the axis of conflict and reconciliation. Analyzing identity change from this perspective is also relevant to the literature on conflict and reconciliation. This chapter demonstrates how.

### ***The Concept of National Identity***

The notion of 'identity' has been a much analyzed concept in a broad range of academic disciplines:<sup>59</sup> as John Shotter observes, it has become the 'watchword of the times'.<sup>60</sup> Drawing on psychology's and sociology's significant insights, especially social identity theory<sup>61</sup> and identity theory<sup>62</sup>, identity has widely been conceptualized as a socio-cognitive category which comes into being through socio-cognitive processes of self-identification and categorization and has different salience<sup>63</sup> depending on the social roles it designates. These traditional ways of seeing social identity established the idea that identity is predicated upon membership in a group which one falls into or feels one belongs to<sup>64</sup>. Thus it outlines simultaneously both the links and the boundaries between the individual and the social. Even this relatively uncontroversial conceptualization reveals identity as

<sup>59</sup> Rogers Brubaker and Federic Cooper, 'Beyond Identity', *Theory and Society* 29 (1), (2000): 1-47 on the various meanings the concept of identity has across the academic disciplinary spectre.

<sup>60</sup> John Shotter, *The Cultural Politics of Everyday Life* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1993), 188; see also Astrid von Busekist, 'Uses and Misuses of the Concept of Identity', *Security Dialogue* 35 (1), (2004): 81-98, problematizing this condition ('everything today is a question of 'identity', 81).

<sup>61</sup> Originally formulated by Henri Tajfel (Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) but also Henri Tajfel (ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)), further developed by Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications* (London: Routledge, 1988), Donald M. Taylor and Fathali M. Moghaddam, *Theories of Intergroup Relations* (Westport: Praeger, 1994), etc.

<sup>62</sup> E.g. Peter Burke, 'The Self: Measurement Requirements from an Interactionist Perspective', *Social Psychology Quarterly* 43 (1980): 18-29, Ralph Turner, 'The Role and the Person', *American Journal of Sociology* 84 (1978): 1-23.

<sup>63</sup> The likelihood that the identity will be invoked in diverse situations, see George McCall and Jerry Simmons, *Identity and Interactions* (New York: Free Press, 1978), Sheldon Stryker, 'Identity Salience and Role Performance: The Importance of Symbolic Interaction Theory for Family Research', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 30 (1968): 558-64, Mary Wiley, 'Gender, Work, and Stress: The Potential Impact of Role-Identity Salience and Commitment', *Sociological Quarterly* 32 (1991): 495-510.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Hogg, Deborah Terry and Katherine White, 'A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory', *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58 (4), (1995): 255-269.

inherently divisive: it enables the division of the social world between 'Self(ves)' and 'Other(s)'. This is what pre-conditions its conflictual potential, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter III. As Mole synthesizes in the introductory chapter to his edited volume on the discursive constructions of identity in European politics, identity outlines 'who we are or are perceived to be' and where we 'locate ourselves' in the social world with regard to others, either as individuals or groups.<sup>65</sup> This formulation, which points to the subjective, relational and contingent quality of identity articulation, has served as a reference point in forging the conceptualization of national identity in this dissertation.

*National* identity increased its academic relevance in view of understanding identity-based conflict<sup>66</sup> and the politics of aggressive nationalism. Following the conceptualization of social identity in general, national identity has customarily been treated as another type of collective identity. It is also predicated upon membership in a social group – the nation – as a source of collective self-identification. Thus, as per Mole's definition, it outlines who 'we' are as a nation and where 'we' locate ourselves in the world of nations. This understanding is useful in that it highlights the centrality of the concept of 'nation' in upholding national identity. But since the political relevance of nations and nationhood has traditionally been investigated within the study of nationalism, it is this academic field which has established the dominant framework for analysis of national identity.<sup>67</sup> This has left an imprint on the mainstream take on national identity: its salience has been associated with aggressive nationalism as the traditional object of analysis of Nationalism Studies. As shall be argued below, such conceptualization of national identity overlooks significant aspects of its political relevance.

Within the study of nationalism, the central clash has been that between primordialists (or essentialists) and modernists (or constructionists), divided by their different ontological approaches to seeing the nation<sup>68</sup>. Primordialists see nations as organic communities

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<sup>65</sup> Richard Mole (ed.), *Discursive Constructions of Identity in European Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3.

<sup>66</sup> In IR theory usually referred to as 'ethno-political conflict'.

<sup>67</sup> The habitual connotational usage of the terms 'nationalism' and 'national identity' in the same context confirms this.

<sup>68</sup> Various authors have classified views on nationhood along these lines, for a good overview see e.g. Umut Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, e.g. 5-8.

united by shared culture, history and biology formed over centuries of common past. This conceptualization, characterizing most of the earlier scholarship on nationalism, treats the nation as an objective phenomenon and analyzes it scientifically as the basic human community that has survived through history.<sup>69</sup> The idea that nations can be reified and studied as an objective phenomenon has quickly been put to doubt by more contemporary studies questioning the credibility of the nationhood narratives and suggesting that nations, just as all other social categories, are constructed and their study should focus on identifying the social practices and contexts which called them into existence.<sup>70</sup> Ethno-symbolists, represented prominently by Anthony Smith, have attempted to respond, claiming that even though modern nations are constructed, they have stable historical roots in the ethnic communities ('ethnies') providing the 'myths, memories, values and symbols'<sup>71</sup> as the basis of commonality necessary for the formation of nations. Though elaborately laid out, this argument fails to provide convincing theoretical justification for seeing the category of 'ethnies' as less constructed than that of 'nations'.<sup>72</sup> Modernist conceptualizations, on the other hand, claim that nations are a product of modernity and their ancient histories have been constructed by political élites as a means to various political aims. These 'constructionist' conceptualizations, however, do not address the fact that, even though the idea of the constructed nature of nations has more or less been generally established in today's social sciences, the social groups that they reify are still treated as real by their members and still constitute the basis for political agency.<sup>73</sup> These issues have opened the way for alternative approaches to theorizing the nation and studying national identity, one of the most challenging of which is through discourse.

The discursive conceptualization of national identity refers in many ways to a piece of academic work which first appeared in the early 1980s and significantly changed the way

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<sup>69</sup> Representative for this approach is Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books: New York, 1973), or Pierre Van der Berghe, 'Race and ethnicity: a sociobiological perspective', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1 (4), (1978): 401-411, as well as Pierre Van der Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Praeger, 1987).

<sup>70</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), in the Marxist vein Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>71</sup> Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 15.

<sup>72</sup> The omission noted by Mole in Mole (ed.), *Discursive Constructions of Identity*, 7.

<sup>73</sup> As Mole observes, *ibid.*, 8.

nations and nationalism had been studied: Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Claiming that nations are 'imagined'<sup>74</sup>, since its members were convinced of each other's allegiance to the community without knowing even a small number of its representatives, raised important questions about their social construction as a community. What made the 'imagining' possible, according to Anderson, was the development of printing and the consequent standardization of vernacular languages, which offered profoundly new ways of communication and identification. Radically transforming the power relations, this created common discursive spaces demarcated by standardized languages.<sup>75</sup> Establishing the link between the political community of the nation and standardized language is significant. People have always spoken in different ways. But the idea that languages *are* different across specified territorial units is, perhaps, the first of the 'invented permanencies'<sup>76</sup> which allowed the division of the world into a world of nations. Moreover, printed standardized language established the means of communication for large groups of people, enabling them to share their stories of who they are and where they stand with regard to others, thus perpetuating the narratives of their collective subjectivity and forging the stories of nationhood.

If nations are 'imagined communities', then national identity is also 'imagined'. It is not determined by 'real' circumstances or objectifiable reference points. Within mainstream interpretations of nationhood, many authoritative definitions have attempted to establish the various elements which identify the nation as a human collectivity in order to determine national identity's fundament. Smith lists historical territory, common myths and historical memories, common mass public culture, common legal rights and duties, common economy.<sup>77</sup> Bloom stresses the importance of internalized national symbols.<sup>78</sup> Hall underlines the significance of national culture.<sup>79</sup> Rennan elaborates on the elements

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<sup>74</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

<sup>76</sup> As per Billig's original phraseology (Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 29). On nations and languages, see also Billig, *ibid.*, 13-36.

<sup>77</sup> Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Penguin Books: London, 1991), 9-14.

<sup>78</sup> William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 52.

<sup>79</sup> Stuart Hall (ed.), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), 612.

of remembering and forgetting in forging the story of the nation.<sup>80</sup> In this vein of thought even Karl Deutsch's witty remark on the 'common error about ancestry and common dislike of neighbours' could designate elements uniting the group.<sup>81</sup> In their attempts to be thorough in establishing what defines the nation, however, many students of nationalism (from the primordialist and the modernist schools alike) commit an analytical error which plagues the field to this day. As Brubaker observes in his 1994 work on rethinking nationhood, they 'adopt categories of practice as categories of analysis'<sup>82</sup>. They take 'a conception inherent in the *practice* of nationalism and in the workings of the modern state and state-system [...] namely the reifying conception of nations as real communities' and make it central to the *theory* of nationalism.<sup>83</sup> Although Brubaker makes the point within his critique of the 'substantialist' (or realist) view of the nation and goes on to question that, he actually uncovers a weakness that is also common to constructionist conceptualizations studying the role of agency in constructing the meanings of nationhood. This weakness is namely the focus on *defining* nations and *reifying* national identity. Focusing on the material dimensions of nationhood is missing the point. After all, the story of the nation can be imagined out of anything and people with the same ethnic origins can have different ideas about their nationhood. The same is true for analyses attached to misleading notions of agency. Despite the unquestionable role of élites in articulating the meanings of nationhood, it is not élites who make people believe that dying for their fatherland is *dulce et decorum*<sup>84</sup>. It is this powerful imperative which suggests that national identity cannot be theorized simply as one type of social identity among many.

Critical analyses, on the other hand, do not attempt to define national identity itself. National identity is 'not a thing, it is not a particular psychological condition, nor is it an

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<sup>80</sup> Ernest Renan, 'What Is a Nation?', Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), 11 – forgetting as a 'crucial element in the creation of nations', a form of 'collective amnesia'.

<sup>81</sup> Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1969), 3.

<sup>82</sup> Rogers Brubaker, 'Rethinking Nationhood: Nation as Institutionalized Form, Practical Category, Contingent Event', *Contention* 4 (1), (1994): 3-14, see also, Rogers Brubaker, 'The Manichean Myth: Rethinking the Distinction Between 'Civic' and 'Ethnic' Nationalism' in Hanspeter Kriesi et al., *Nation and National Identity: The European Experience in Perspective* (Zurich: Ruegger, 1999), 55-71.

<sup>83</sup> Brubaker, *Rethinking Nationhood*, 5.

<sup>84</sup> In Horace's immortal words, poeticized by Wilfred Owen after the First World War. Wilfred Owen, *The War Poems of Wilfred Owen*/ edited and introduced by Jon Stallworthy (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994).

inward emotion'<sup>85</sup>. It is rather a way of thinking and talking about the 'Self', which upholds the discourse essentializing the division of the world into nations, and it is a way of being within this world of nations.<sup>86</sup> National identity can thus be thought of as *a collection of narratives which inhabit a particular discursive space*. This discursive space has customarily been demarcated by borders encapsulating the nation into the state and essentializing the historical invention of the nation-state as the organizing unit of the political world. By focusing on the meanings attached to the *narratives* of national identity, critical analyses set out to uncover the mechanisms of establishing the powerful discourse which structures our world in a hegemonic manner: the discourse of nationalism.

A discursive approach reveals the ontological peculiarity of national identity as a form of collective self-identification<sup>87</sup>. As Billig observes in his study of everyday nationalism, 'if we think of national identity as equivalent to any other form of identity, then we overlook the historical particularities of nationalism and its links to the world of nations.'<sup>88</sup> Indeed, it seems obvious that the human individual has recourse to a series of collective identities: a person can be simultaneously British, of Caribbean descent, mixed-race, male, heterosexual, Christian, an entrepreneur, an immigrant and a music-lover. Obviously again, these group identities do not have the same personal significance: an individual is rarely willing to die for their profession or hobby but it is conceivable that they are for their nation or, say, religion. This suggests that even though simultaneously available, group identities are organized hierarchically and have different salience. At first glance, the salience of national identity may seem deceptively unimportant: in the globalized world of today the stories of the nation may pass unnoticed and unacknowledged. But even when not invoked on a daily basis, these stories always remain in the background because the discourse they are part of binds the social individuals in many powerful ways, both legal and cultural, to the political world they inhabit. Unlike any other identity, even the most

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<sup>85</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 60.

<sup>86</sup> Billig formulates this observation with reference to critical approaches to theorizing identity, see John Shotter and Kenneth Gergen (eds.), *Texts of Identity* (London: Sage, 1989), Kum-Kum Bhavnani and Ann Phoenix, 'Shifting Identities, Shifting Racisms: an Introduction', *Feminism and Psychology* 4, (1994): 5-18.

<sup>87</sup> Mole distinguishes between 'identity' and 'identification' in order to include the notion of agency in the construction of identity (*ibid.*, Chapter 1). Acknowledging this approach as useful, this dissertation adopts a different definition of identity and uses the two terms interchangeably.

<sup>88</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 65.

salient ones such as gender, race, religion, national identity links the individual to the essentialized order of the political with bonds that are pre-given and cannot be individually renounced. Structuring the basic meanings upon which all other discourses operate, the discourse of nationalism upholds national identity as a background to all other sources of self-identification. This is what determines its profound effects on human life. But being 'imagined', at the same time, national identity needs to be perpetually determined and over-determined in order to appear natural and stable. Within the discourse of nationalism, stability is achieved through categorical acts of exclusion denying the contingent nature of the 'national' world. Thus national identity is necessarily antagonistic: it perpetuates the tension between the national 'Self' and its constitutive 'Other(s)' in order to exist. A discursive approach has the potential to reflect these peculiarities, being able to account for the ever recurring salience of national identity as a source of collective self-identification, to explain its binding relevance to the realm of the political, and to theoretically address its conflictual charge.

### ***The Discourse of Nationalism***

Approaching the phenomenon of nationalism from a discursive perspective also proves particularly apt for understanding its peculiarities. It allows transcending rationalist conceptualizations of nationalism as violent ideology of nationalist conflict and reveals nationalism's role as upholding the dominant modern ideology of the state. Studying nationalism through a discursive perspective promises to overcome the limitations of traditional approaches and to offer a fuller understanding of its political relevance.

Nationalism has long been a subject of scientific enquiry. The term 'nationalism' (*Nationalismus*) is ascribed to Herder and his philosophy of history<sup>89</sup>. Rooted in the programme for human emancipation of the Enlightenment<sup>90</sup>, nationalism became a legitimate political project with the French Revolution. Upholding the idea of popular

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<sup>89</sup> Frederick Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

<sup>90</sup> Rousseau and Kant (see Victor Gourevitch (ed.) *Rousseau: 'The Social Contract' and Other Later Political Writings* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History and Morals* (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983)).

sovereignty, the Revolution asserted for the first time the claim that the legitimacy of the state is determined by its people. The intellectual effort to conceptualize the people as a community led to the idea of a 'nation' as a natural fact. Embodied by German romanticism and French naturalism, nationalism is first theorized as an integrative movement of identifying the nation as a cultural community and unifying it as a territory.<sup>91</sup> Establishing the link between nation and territory is a key tenet of nationalism and one that highlights its recurring political relevance. After the Westphalian peace, territory in Europe was ascribed to sovereign states. Their borders demarcated physically and politically inviolable spaces with equal standing before the law. Re-thinking sovereignty as stemming from popular will (rather than divine right) 'populated' these spaces with communities of like-minded people<sup>92</sup> and the idea of nations came to personify them. Treating nations as objective realities on the other hand justified this arrangement and gradually essentialized it. The factual discrepancy between the 'natural' national communities and existing state borders was addressed by mobilizing movements of disruptive nationalism, which characterized the best part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe.

The period marked by the two world wars prompted a new conceptualization of nationalism as an ideology of aggression. Building up on the idea of the constructive, state-building function of nationalism of the previous century, 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars contrasted it to the destructive aggressive nationalism which had caused the wars. This duality in seeing nationalism characterizes key academic work from the period. Carlton Hayes speaks of patriotism and nationalism.<sup>93</sup> Hans Kohn differentiates between civilized and barbarian nationalism.<sup>94</sup> Louis Snyder contrasts 'old' nationalism and 'new' nationalism.<sup>95</sup> Conceptualizing the dichotomy of nationalism placed historical and geographical limits to the phenomenon which were largely arbitrary. The implied ethical superiority of one type of nationalism over the other established clear hierarchies between different nations,

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<sup>91</sup> Fichte, Herder, Michelet, Renan (see Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Herder, *ibid.* emphasizing the ethnic dimension of nationalism, Jules Michelet, *History of the French Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) emphasizing the civic dimension of nationalism, also Renan, 'What Is a Nation?').

<sup>92</sup> Because they had presumably expressed the same will to be governed.

<sup>93</sup> Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism*, Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion*.

<sup>94</sup> Kohn, *Nationalism*.

<sup>95</sup> Louis Snyder, *The New Nationalism* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1968).



justifying politics of 'legitimate' domination. Moreover, the dichotomy suggested that one type of nationalism is peaceful and liberating, while another is aggressive and subjugating. This is problematic because it overlooks the fact that nationalism's antagonistic potential comes from the necessary acts of exclusion, without which identifying the contours of the nation would be impossible. In this sense, all types of nationalism are antagonistic. Yet another problem with these conceptualizations is their assumption of pre-existing nations, which ignores the constitutive effect of the concept of the nation-state over the notion of the nation. Treating nations as 'natural' contains a pre-supposed assumption about the political world, structuring it in an ideological manner, which should be theoretically acknowledged. Nevertheless, nationalism scholarship from this period makes certain conceptual advances which are still relevant. Kohn conceptualizes nationalism as a sentiment, a 'state of mind', referring to and pertinent in politics. In this way he suggests its significance in linking the personal to the political<sup>96</sup>. Snyder expands on the dichotomous conceptualization and identifies seven categories of nationalism<sup>97</sup>, thus opening the way to problematizing the dichotomy all together.

Interest in the subject of nationalism, understandably, subsided with the rise of communism. Taking up key assumptions of Marxist social theory, Trotsky and Lenin re-worked them into an alternative state ideology challenging the legitimacy of the nation-state. The Cold War and the bloc opposition which it established globally diverted political attention to international politics, marginalizing the national problematique and nationalism. Key contribution from this period is modernization theory's conceptualization of surging nationalist movements in the world periphery<sup>98</sup> as protest against Western domination and exploitation.<sup>99</sup> This approach perpetuated the arbitrary dichotomy of good and bad nationalism but its novelty, establishing the relation between capitalism and

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<sup>96</sup> Kohn, *Nationalism*.

<sup>97</sup> Unifying the historical dimension with geographical: European-fissiparous, African-black, Asian-anticolonial, Middle Eastern politico-religious, Latin American-populist, Soviet Union-messianic, the United States-'melting pot' nationalism) in Louis Snyder, *The New Nationalism*.

<sup>98</sup> Africa, Asia, Latin America, as per Lenin's idea of world 'core' and 'periphery' developed into Wallerstein's world-systems theory (see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York, Academic Press, 1974).

<sup>99</sup> Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (NY: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: an Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966).

peripheral nationalism, opened up the way for theorizing nationalism as a modern phenomenon.

Prompted by the decline of communism, the 1980s ushered in new scholarship on nationalism which differed in method, scale and quantity<sup>100</sup>. Referenced prominently by the work of John Breuilly<sup>101</sup>, Ernest Gellner<sup>102</sup>, Benedict Anderson<sup>103</sup>, and Eric Hobsbawm<sup>104</sup>, it outlined the modernist view of nationalism which to a large extent made previous scholarship obsolete<sup>105</sup>. Most significantly, it problematized the assumption of nationalism as primordial attachment to the natural entity of the nation. It theorized the nation as a by-product of modern conditions (the decline of former centres of authority such as the church and the feud, the invention of printing, industrialization and the rise of capitalism, etc.) and confirmed its recent appearance and contingent nature. In other words, nationalism was now seen as neither inherent in human nature, nor deep-rooted in history.<sup>106</sup> It was conceptualized as a political project of modernity, which managed to embody its key dialectic – the tension between differentiation and integration<sup>107</sup>, as well as its key markers – state formation, democratization, capitalism, intellectualization of culture<sup>108</sup>. This conceptualization accounted for the vast typology of nationalisms, depending on the particularities of the processes of modernization<sup>109</sup>. Most importantly, by renouncing the primordial ties of nationalism, it enabled imagining a world without it. Indeed, an analysis of nationalism in the context of globalization seemed to promise its gradual decline.<sup>110</sup> Centring the analysis on the Western hemisphere, however, modernist scholars were largely unable to transcend the normative implication of ‘failed’ modernity

<sup>100</sup> As B. Anderson reflects in retrospect in the preface to his second edition of *Imagined Communities*.

<sup>101</sup> John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982).

<sup>102</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>103</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

<sup>104</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1788*.

<sup>105</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., xii.

<sup>106</sup> See for instance Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: a History. Nation and State in the Arab World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

<sup>107</sup> Gerard Delanty and Patrick O’Mahony, *Nationalism and Social Theory* (London: Sage, 2002), 35.

<sup>108</sup> Delanty and O’Mahony, *Nationalism and Social Theory*, 9.

<sup>109</sup> Listed among the types of nationalism are state patriotism, liberal nationalism, reconstructive, integral, irredentist, secessionist, cultural, religious, transnationalism, etc, see Delanty, *ibid.*, 120.

<sup>110</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1788*.

when theorizing nationalism in the developing world<sup>111</sup> and do not offer convincing explication of what the key similarity is between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ nationalisms. Entrapped within their analytical framework of rationality, modernists were also puzzled by the recurrent relevance of ‘bad’ nationalism not only to the periphery but to the very core of the ‘West’. Thinking of nationalism simply as a political project<sup>112</sup>, they fail to factor in the link between the personal micro-level and the political macro-level which national identity signifies. Furthermore, modernists link nationalism to a reified image of the nation, even though they theorize it as ‘imagined’. Their project of appeasing conflicting nationalisms, therefore, focuses on the material dimension of conflict and does not address its underlying drive of irrationality. These deficiencies raised criticism and called for re-thinking of mainstream conceptualizations of nationalism.

Within the wider criticism of modernity raised by critical theory, and poststructuralist and postmodernist approaches in the social sciences, the study of nationalism was dramatically challenged because of its traditional embeddedness in positivist ontologies and its traditional aspiration to epistemological rationality. Uncovering the constraining effects of dominant discourses as totalizing systems of meaning<sup>113</sup> over political reality and our knowledge of it, these approaches suggest new ways of theorizing the role of the state, power relations and social control.<sup>114</sup> They uncover the mechanisms for establishing hierarchies of domination through appropriating hegemonic control over social meanings<sup>115</sup>: the meanings of nationhood, of belonging, of responsibility, of otherness. In the heart of this conceptualization is postpositivist epistemology of subjectivism assuming the detachment of social meaning from objective reality<sup>116</sup>. Thus, the idea of nationhood as ‘imagined’, already put forth by modernists, was further developed into a thorough

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<sup>111</sup> E.g. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.

<sup>112</sup> Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*.

<sup>113</sup> This approach to seeing ‘discourse’ follows Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

<sup>114</sup> Ben Agger, ‘Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance’, *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991): 105-131.

<sup>115</sup> Foucault’s seminal works on punishment (Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1995)) and sexuality (Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: the History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin Books, 1998)).

<sup>116</sup> Baudrillard calls it ‘hyper-reality’ – simulated reality created by symbols of mass consumption which people fail to recognize as simulated, see Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).

conceptual framework of seeing national identity and its elements as subjective and contextual. Poststructuralists also reveal the central role of language in constituting social reality, meanings and subject positions, which suggests that any relevant understanding of social phenomena, such as nationalism, should start from studying the language used to speak of them.<sup>117</sup> Postmodern studies of nationalism, therefore, focus on nationalist rhetoric and the meanings it articulates in order to establish the contours of the nation. This completely reverses the logic of previous conceptualizations which started from studying the material dimensions of nationhood and attempted to work out its meaning upon this basis. Rejecting totalizing perspectives on knowledge, students of nationalism working in the postmodern vein did not produce any one general theory of nationalism. They maintain that one can only tell 'small stories' about the world from the heterogeneous 'subject positions' of individuals and social groups.<sup>118</sup> This epistemological fragmentism they have been criticized for. Operating on both micro- and macro-levels and from multiple perspectives, however, postmodern scholarship on nationalism has offered ways to transcend many of the limitations of mainstream approaches, such as their Westocentrism, their preoccupation with typologies, their inability to account in a convincing manner for the fluctuating salience of national identity, their intimidation by the mobilizing power of nationalist rhetoric.

It is on this challenging conceptual background that the dissertation conceptualizes nationalism. Nationalism is treated here as a totalizing grand discourse<sup>119</sup> which emerged and was empowered within the historical constellation that led to the political organization of the world into nation-states. The hegemony of this grand discourse is maintained by the stability of the signifiers which uphold it: the idea of popular sovereignty, the constitution of the *populus* as a nation, the objectification of nationhood, the attachment of nationhood to statehood, the inviolability of nation-state's sovereignty, etc. The meaning of social reality is established within this totalizing system, so any subject

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<sup>117</sup> This is the link between language and 'its other', which Derrida speaks of, see Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), also Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, translated by Alan Bass (London: Athlone, 1981).

<sup>118</sup> Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*.

<sup>119</sup> Not much unlike Lyotard's conceptualization (and criticism) of Marxism as per Agger, 'Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism'.

position or social identity will be meaningful only within it. The centrality of the nationhood signifier in the hegemonic discursive structure and its function as a source of self-identification determines the special status of national identity among all other social identities. As any discursive system, however, nationalism should be seen as contingent upon the historical circumstances which enabled its emergence, and vulnerable to the political forces which its empowerment excluded. Therefore, a new historical constellation brought to existence by these forces could challenge its hegemony. This would depend on the successful articulation of alternative meanings of the upholding signifiers. The grand discourse of Europeanization attempted to do just that.

### ***The Discourse of Europeanization***

The theory on the concept of Europeanization is immense, as the notes below suggest. This dissertation makes use of the term as a *discipline* when discussing the place of national identity in Europeanization literature and makes references to it as a *political project* when naming the process of European integration. The analysis also makes observations on the term as a *political phenomenon* when discussing the way Europeanization has affected the political salience of national identity. This threefold usage of the term 'Europeanization' has been so overwhelming in academic literature that it has prompted authors to speak of 'the many faces of Europeanization'<sup>120</sup> and 'Europeanization [...] as a problem'<sup>121</sup>. It is not surprising then that defining the concept of Europeanization has not been particularly straightforward.

Since it is more or less unproblematic what Europeanization as a discipline analyzes and what Europeanization as a political project represents, the difficulty must come from conceptualizing Europeanization as a political phenomenon. Most definitions of Europeanization as phenomenon make reference to the notion of change.<sup>122</sup> But they also

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<sup>120</sup> Johan Olsen, 'The Many Faces of Europeanization', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (5), (2002): 921-52.

<sup>121</sup> Claudio Radaelli, 'Europeanization: Solution or Problem?', *European Integration Online Papers* 8 (16), (2004) at <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2004-016a.htm>.

<sup>122</sup> Kevin Featherstone and Georgios Kazamias, *Europeanization and the Southern Periphery* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier (eds.), *The Europeanization of Central*

raise a series of problems. The immediate problem that follows concerns the *dynamics* of the definition: whether we should define Europeanization as the process of change or the causal result thereof. The implications of each variant are different. In the former case any response to the forces of change will still constitute Europeanization, while in the latter Europeanization will be only convergence. A further specification is needed here: whether the results are reversible or not. In this case we are discussing the *quality* of the invoked change: some analysts add the adjective 'structural' to qualify it.<sup>123</sup> Another problem in defining Europeanization is the *level of analysis*: whether we discuss phenomena at the supra-national level, the state level or the sub-state level. Again, the implications of each lead us to different research approaches, different research foci, and ultimately, different research results. This point is to address the proliferation of various 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches measuring compliance, socialization and convergence in the functioning of the European institutions or in the domestic institutional practices. A fourth problem arising from attempting to define Europeanization is the *scope* of the definition. One aspect of it is whether we treat Europeanization as an internal phenomenon to the members of the European Union or as a phenomenon that could also concern the states that are linked in one way or another to it (candidate members, associated members, neighbour states, etc.). Although some analysts do include non-member states in their studies of Europeanization,<sup>124</sup> most authors exclude states that are not closely linked to the EU as candidate members. Another aspect of the definitional scope problem is where we look for the *sources* of Europeanization: are we just talking about the effects of the EU enlargement and the EU integration process, or do we also consider the potential that European international organizations such as the Council of Europe or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe might have for invoking change.<sup>125</sup>

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and Eastern Europe (Cornell University Press, 2005), Kevin Featherstone and Claudio Radaelli (eds.), *The Politics of Europeanization* (Oxford University Press, 2003), Vivien A. Schmidt, 'Europeanization and the Mechanics of Economic Policy Adjustment', *European Integration Online Papers* 5 (6), (2001) at <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/pdf/2001-006.pdf>.

<sup>123</sup> Featherstone and Kazamias, *Europeanization and the Southern Periphery*, Featherstone and Radaelli, *The Politics of Europeanization*.

<sup>124</sup> For instance, Featherstone and Kazamias, *Europeanization and the Southern Periphery*, in their third dimension of Europeanization.

<sup>125</sup> Even though thinking of Europeanization only in terms of the effects caused by the process of EU integration is obviously a EU-centric view that overlooks the identity of the non-participating European states

It is obvious that there are many aspects of the Europeanization phenomenon which need to be taken into consideration in order to agree on a thorough definition and thus establish a clear basis for any research attempt. Students of Europeanization from different schools have necessarily had to leave out certain aspects of it, depending on the research perspective they start from. In the field of International Relations theory, the main clash has been that between realists, liberalists and constructivists. As the dominant paradigm during the period witnessing the first steps towards integration in Europe, realism conceptualized the reasons behind the inception of the European project, the formulation of its founding treaties and the actual functioning of its institutions, in terms of its limiting understanding of national interest and its dominant focus on anarchic environment. Starting from this intellectual fundament, neofunctionalist<sup>126</sup> and intergovernmentalist<sup>127</sup> theories of European integration provided much more detailed accounts of the integration dynamics. Even though they remained within the rationalist camp, neofunctionalists addressed the self-fulfilling inertia generated by the originally controlled processes of integration, thus clearing the way for the claim that the European project is more than a peculiar intergovernmental initiative. Diverting analytical attention from the regional to the global context and focusing on domestic rather than international politics, liberal intergovernmentalists<sup>128</sup> added new insights into understanding the phenomenon of Europeanization by exploring state behaviour. The profound changes which the end of the Cold War brought to Europe, however, could not be easily accommodated by rationalist accounts of integration. Neither could be the opening up of the Europeanization project towards the former communist states and the re-thinking which it required. Despite the convincing attempts of realists to explain the changes

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and the commonality between them and the rest of Europe, it is the approach adopted by this research project. This limitation is necessary in terms of the project's analytical goals and research interest: studying the interactions between narratives of nationhood and the Europeanization discourse in view of the place of national identity within the integration project and its future.

<sup>126</sup> Taking Mitrany's functionalist ideas, Ernst Haas develops these into an integral theoretical perspective, see Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces 1950–1957* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968).

<sup>127</sup> See as a reference point Stanley Hoffmann, 'The European Process at Atlantic Crosspurposes', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 3 (1964): 85–101, also Stanley Hoffmann, 'Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation State and the Case of Western Europe', *Daedalus* 95 (1966): 862–915.

<sup>128</sup> Building up on Hoffmann's theses, Moravcsik's ideas are mostly associated with this approach, see Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (New York: Ithaca, 1998).

occurring both within and outside the EU as a result of political interest and political conditionality, an increasing number of constructivist accounts started demonstrating that there was a very powerful normative aspect to the process of Europeanization which defied realist explanations.<sup>129</sup> Both norm entrepreneurship on behalf of the EU and norm compliance on behalf of the applicant states represented political positions that could not be grounded in the simple logic of consequences, but seemed to be governed by a logic of appropriateness. But while constructivists produced compelling analytical insights into the normative dimension of Europeanization, they remained analytically constrained by the presumed duality between objective and subjective reality, between the consequential and the appropriate. Moreover, their perspective in explaining normative change remained consistently élite-centred, which prevented them from producing convincing accounts of the powerful popular narratives of euro-enthusiasm and euro-scepticism capable of enabling or disabling political action. This left constructivist scholarship analytically vulnerable. It was more radically critical approaches to studying European politics, which dissociated their analyses from epistemological rationalism, that could address this vulnerability in a convincing manner. Reflectivist accounts of Europeanization aimed to demonstrate that the distinction between 'interest-driven' and 'norm-driven' behaviour is analytically futile. Actors are bound by the discourses which structured the meaning of their identities and cannot transgress their limits. So the contents of all categories they instrumentalize should be analyzed as contingent upon these discourses and within their contextual frames.

This dissertation treats the phenomenon of Europeanization, much like the phenomenon of nationalism, as a grand discourse. Europeanization also emerged in the context of a particular historical constellation. The devastation of the post-war period and the traumas left by Nazism gave rise to the idea of ensuring peaceful coexistence through mutual interdependence beyond traditional forms of cooperation and laid the foundations of European integration. Unlike the discourse of nationalism, Europeanization did not reproduce the centrality of the signifier of nationhood, even though it made allowance for it.

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<sup>129</sup> See for an overview of this argument Jeffrey Checkel, 'Norms, Institutions, and National Identity in Contemporary Europe', *International Studies Quarterly* 43 (1), (1999): 83-114 or Jeffrey Checkel, 'Social Construction and Integration', *Journal of European Public Policy* 6(4) Special Issue (1999): 545-60.



Most significantly, it modified the contents of the signifier of sovereignty, detaching it from the domain of the nation-state and articulating it as a negotiable category. It took over the notion of popular sovereignty but attached it to a community of *populi*, transcending the limits of the nation. Consequently, within the discourse of Europeanization the narratives of national identity were re-worked to 'reveal' shared past (Christianity, secular statehood, intellectualized culture) and predict common destiny on the basis of the values which these narratives upheld ('interest', 'responsibility', 'rule of law', 'liberal democracy', 'market economy', 'human rights', etc.). In this sense, the discourse of Europeanization captured key signifiers of nationalism and rendered them with modified meanings, changing the way the national stories were told. This provided the conditions of possibility for the dislocation of the discourse of nationalism in Europe. Sovereignty, however, was only partially modified and the nation-state continued to prerogatively dispose of it. This perpetuated the political relevance of the national narratives and prevented the actual dislocation of nationalism. Even though the community of the 'European' states was positioned as a subject, trivial collective affiliation remained with the nation-state. The nationhood narratives might have been updated but their historical sedimentation was not questioned. This is why the challenge Europeanization posed to the hegemony of nationalism was only partial. The chronological longevity of the latter furnished it with precedence over meaning.

As demonstrated above, the discursive conceptualization of 'Europeanization' agrees with the general definitional line which sees Europeanization as 'change': a change in the established discursive order. Its perpetuation and over-determination involves a continuous process of hegemonic articulations between the subjects and objects that are part of the discourse at the supranational, national and sub-national levels. As a result of these articulations, meanings are constantly re-defined. A discursive conceptualization of 'Europeanization' therefore also implies that change is never qualitatively irreversible: the hegemony of a discourse rests upon a necessary exclusion of other political options, which always constantly threaten it with subversion. In this sense the empowerment of Europeanization could always be reverted to either give way to a renewed hegemony of nationalism or to an alternative totalizing discourse. This is why studying the divergent

interpretations of national identity narratives as central discursive elements promises to shed light on the power of the Europeanization discourse in Europe.

This analysis has been ultimately inspired by the possibility for marginalization and eventual dislocation of the discourse of nationalism. Taking into account its historical contingency, however, and the foreseeable inability to transcend the political context of the nation-state, the dissertation does not attempt to study this possibility. Instead, it focuses on the empowerment of Europeanization *within the context of hegemonic nationalism*. Setting out to uncover the mechanisms of accommodation of the central signifying element of the hegemonic discourse – national identity – the current piece of research attempts to establish the possibility for co-existence of the two discourses. In a different historical constellation, such co-existence might enable a world without nationalism.

### ***Conflict and Reconciliation***

The possibility looks desirable because of the strong association of nationalism with violence, aggression and conflict. This association was established historically during the era of world war and Germany's war-prone ethnic nationalism. It was re-enforced by the belligerent justification in all participating states. The Ottoman and Habsburg empires went to war to block state-subverting ethnic nationalism.<sup>130</sup> Their defeat asserted the cause of 'national self-determination' through war: one of the proclaimed principles of liberal democracy.<sup>131</sup> The Western Allies went to both wars precisely to defend liberal democracy but the idea of liberal democracy was inextricably linked to the Western form of civic nation-states, upholding a notion of civic nationalism. Against the background of more immediate threats and a different type of antagonism during the Cold War, the link between nationalism and conflict was briefly released. Civic nationalism became the Western norm, while ethno-nationalism began to seem redundant with decolonization. With the end of the bloc opposition, it became clear that nationalist conflict had not

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<sup>130</sup> John Breuilly's overview in Baylis, Smith and Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics*, 404.

<sup>131</sup> See Woodrow Wilson 14 Points at <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=62>.

remained in history. The disintegration of the communist federations witnessed a resurgence of state-subverting ethnic nationalism, while the consolidation of statehood in the newly independent states called up state-strengthening civic nationalism (which, however, was based on monolithic ethnic identities).<sup>132</sup> The politicization of ethnic identity as legitimating the nation-state saw the demarcation of a new type of fault lines around the issue of ethnic minorities. Exploding in war and ethnic cleansing in parts of former Yugoslavia<sup>133</sup>, intra-state conflict based on ethnic nationality reminded the international community of the violent potential of nationalism.

The viciousness of these new ethno-national conflicts within the state prompted vivid academic interest in theories of conflict,<sup>134</sup> and produced abundant new scholarship on conflict and conflict reconciliation. This profoundly changed the way we understood conflict: Mary Kaldor conceptualized a new type of warfare displacing the old wars and called for a cosmopolitan political response to it.<sup>135</sup> The current investigation does not aim to contribute directly to this body of literature. It is concerned with conflict based on ethnic nationality to the extent that it investigates the conflictual potential of national identity. But since these new wars were waged on the basis of antagonized national/ethno-national identities, the conclusions reached here will be also, indirectly, relevant to the literature on conflict and conflict reconciliation.

### ***'Europe' and Political Change***

In as much as this study investigates the interactions of the discourses of nationalism and Europeanization in their different interpretations of national identity and the political consequences of each, it is concerned with political change. Particularly along the axis of conflict and reconciliation, where current analytical interest lies, the change this dissertation attempts to identify is transcending conflictuality. As discussed above, the

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<sup>132</sup> The distinction between state-subverting and state-consolidating nationalism as per John Breuilly's overview in Baylis, Smith and Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics*, 408.

<sup>133</sup> And elsewhere in the world, e.g. Rwanda.

<sup>134</sup> One of the most discussed new conceptualizations by Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1999).

<sup>135</sup> Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars* (Stanford University Press, 2007).

European integration project was designed as a means to transcending conflictuality caused by antagonistic interpretations of national identity. During the first decades of integration, Europeanization was largely successful in achieving this goal. This is how special emphasis was laid on its ability to induce change. In academic literature on Europeanization this ability has extensively been analyzed in terms of conceptualizing an emerging European identity. Writings on the subject can be divided in two broad groups.

The first one includes those analysts who forebode the fading of allegiances to the nation as a result of the progress of integration, and the gradual shifting of collective allegiances from the nation-state towards the supranational construct of Europe, creating a common European identity. This common identity is conceptualized to provide the political legitimacy needed for the future development of integration in Europe.<sup>136</sup> Analysts in this group base their claims on two predicates. On the one hand, they establish the limitations of the nation-state in living up to the challenges of globalization: increasing interdependence between states in dealing with global issues and in pooling resources, massive immigration flows transforming previously compact populations, compromised sovereignty at the expense of responsibility to protect<sup>137</sup>, etc. On the other hand, analyses in this vein point to the successful functioning of the integration project (shared institutions, legal framework and political culture) and the natural long-term effects from it. Impeccably logical and most authoritative representation of this approach can be found in Habermas' argument on the future of the nation-state in the era of globalization.<sup>138</sup> Analyzing the potential of supranational regimes such as the EU to succeed where nation-states have failed, it argues that the emergence of a supranational (here, European) identity is the natural consequence of the institutionalization of supranational democratic procedures through a slow historical process, not unlike the one that established the legitimacy of the nation-state itself. In his defence of cosmopolitanism, Habermas insists that such an identity should be based on a civic sense of belonging (persons as citizens),

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<sup>136</sup> Even though 'there's hardly more confused and polysemic a topic in European affairs as identity', for a useful reference point to it, see Furio Cerutti and Sonia Lucarelli, *The Search for a European Identity: Values, Policies and Legitimacy of the European Union* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), 3.

<sup>137</sup> Rooted in Butros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace and formally recognized in 2001 in a report by the same name of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty.

<sup>138</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The inclusion of the Other, Studies in Political Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).

perhaps underestimating the pervasive political relevance of national, ethno-national, and ethno-religious identities. His belief in the democratic nature of the supranational government, too, could be criticized as unreasonably optimistic. In any case, the link between establishing European citizenship and developing European identity has provoked significant academic interest in exploring the political aspects of collective belonging.<sup>139</sup> Slightly different research in this vein, sceptical of the potential of a political identity to provide plausible collective allegiance in the long term, has focused on the commonality of cultural identity, suggesting that the ambivalence between the institutionally established identity of Europe (as the EU) and the non-institutionalized cultural identity of the 'real' Europe is inevitable but actually productive because it ensures its constant reciprocal determination.<sup>140</sup> In general, though, accounts of an emerging European identity, theorized as a sense of supranational collective belonging capable of replacing allegiances to the nation-state, have had one weakness in common. They have proven vulnerable to the questions raised by the salience of national identity, the increased number, and the new types of ethno-nationalist conflicts. They have also not been able to account for the effects of the very processes of globalization continually bringing to Europe its antithetical 'Other(s)' and constantly subverting the fixation of the notion of an established collective 'Self'.

A second group of academic research on Europeanization and change has formed around those analysts who have been more sceptical about the emergence of a common European identity. Various studies from a broad spectrum of epistemological approaches have attempted to detect the existence of such common identity, to define it and even to measure it. An interesting example of the quantitatively oriented analyses of this kind is the joint project of Sifft et al., who establish 'segmented Europeanization' in public

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<sup>139</sup> Thomas Faist, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Beatrice Hansen, *Critique of Violence: Between Poststructuralism and Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2000), Jo Shaw, "Citizenship of the union: towards post-national membership?", *Jean Monnet Working Paper* 6(97), (1997) at <http://www.jeanmonnetprogram.org/papers/01/011401.html>, Antje Wiener, 'Making sense of the new geography of citizenship: Fragmented citizenship in the European Union', UNSPECIFIED, Seattle, Washington. (Unpublished) (1997) at <http://aei.pitt.edu/2754/>.

<sup>140</sup> Peter Burgess, 'What's so European about the European Union? Legitimacy between Institution and Identity', *European Journal of Social Theory* 5(4), (2002): 467–481.

discourse, but conclude that the impact of Europeanization on changes in the public sphere is limited and should not be overstated.<sup>141</sup> Another impressive example in terms of the collated data is Pichler's 'bottom-up' approach to establishing the particular meanings of 'being European' across a large-number study of countries in Europe.<sup>142</sup> He concludes that 'European identity' is unstable and contested and perpetuates the danger of replicating the same national differences it was meant to overcome in the first place. Another representative, reaching very similar conclusions, is Deflem and Pampel's study on popular support for European unification, again based on a comparison across a large number of European member states.<sup>143</sup> Qualitative studies in the same vein attempt to establish the deficiencies of 'Europe' as compared to the nation-state in terms of shared political mythology, popular cultural allegiances and common historical past. Anthony Smith's essay on national identity and the idea of European unity is one such example.<sup>144</sup> Bo Stråth's questioning of the use of the term 'identity' altogether when referring to the existing notions of unity in Europe is another.<sup>145</sup>

The one characteristic most analyses from this group have in common is the (intentional or not entirely) assumption that European identity is comparable to national identity in terms of fundament, features and form. When placed in the framework of this comparison, European identity is bound to fail. As Ole Wæver observes, national identity is still likely to 'win out', making 'Europe' seem irrelevant, if the relative power of loyalty to the two is being tested against each other.<sup>146</sup> The vulnerability of research in this vein remains the fact that this assumption seems to be taken for granted.

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<sup>141</sup> Stefanie Sifft, Michael Brüggemann, Katharina Kleinen-V. Königsöw, Bernhard Peters, Andreas Wimmel, 'Segmented Europeanization: Exploring the Legitimacy of the EU from a Public Discourse Perspective', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 45 (1), (2007): 127-55.

<sup>142</sup> Florian Pichler, 'European Identities from Below: Meanings of Identification with Europe', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 9 (4), (2008): 411-430.

<sup>143</sup> Mathieu Deflem and Fred C. Pampel, 'The Myth of Postnational Identity: Popular Support for European Unification', *Social Forces* 75 (1), (1996): 119-143.

<sup>144</sup> Anthony Smith, 'National Identity and the Idea of European Unity', *International Affairs* 68 (1), (1992): 55-76.

<sup>145</sup> Bo Stråth, 'A European Identity: to the Historical Limits of a Concept', *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (4), (2002): 387-401.

<sup>146</sup> Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver, *European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States* (London: Routledge, 2002), 25.

Placing the debate on the changing role of national identity in Europe within the frame of discussing an emerging European identity, therefore, seems to take it off course. As evident from the arguments representing both positions, there are sufficient reasons to believe that a common European identity is in the forging and has the potential to unite the people in Europe through a sense of belonging to a shared cultural, historical and political community. It is also evident, though, that such a common identity is only now emerging. Although it undoubtedly offers a common source of collective self-identification for the people(s) in Europe, it is simply not as salient as national identity. This is why a comparison between the two would help little in understanding their respective roles within the European construct. It is argued here that the 'European-ness' of identity should be analyzed in terms of what it does offer as a source of collective self-identification, not in terms of its deficiencies as compared to nationality. Debate on the changing role of national identity in the integration project should not be side-tracked by arguments in favour of an emerging European identity, which are beside the point. Instead, it should be focused on the particular effects integration has had on national identity narratives within the Europeanization discourse, and what happens next.

Enlargement as a political imperative of integration in Europe opened up new avenues for investigating Europeanization's potential to induce political change. The impressive body of academic writing dealing with the relations between the European Union and the aspiring candidate member states from the Central and South Eastern parts of Europe, which appeared in view of the prospect of enlargement, forms the natural background of this analysis.

As a rule, the relations between the EU and the former communist states which declared their aspiration for EU membership have been analyzed in a similar logical sequence. In order to qualify for membership, the states need to change and meet certain criteria;<sup>147</sup> in order to help them meet these criteria, the EU uses mechanisms of pressure

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<sup>147</sup> Most often summarized as specified by the Copenhagen Summit in 1993 at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/copenhagen/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/copenhagen/default_en.htm).

(conditionality<sup>148</sup>) and example (norm-socialization<sup>149</sup>) to induce change. This logic is based on the assumption of a notably one-sided relationship between a strong community and an aspiring applicant state, which is, at best, limited. To underestimate the role that the applicant states from the 'New Europe' have played in transforming the European Union itself and changing political realities within the member states would be an unjustifiable analytical oversight. Suffice it to point to the very decision to enlarge despite the required major institutional reform and the associated financial costs and political risks.<sup>150</sup> Other ways in which the EU changed in the context of enlargement are outlined, for example, by the discussion on minority rights, initiated partly in view of the standards of minority protection imposed on the applicant states. The discussion culminated in significant legislative reforms at communitarian and national level, addressing the issue of minority rights and minority protection, which the EU had not been especially concerned with before enlargement. Analyzing the impact of Europeanization from the one-sided perspective of the EU versus an applicant state is also problematic for one other reason. The analysis is based on the rather asymmetric power discrepancy between a strong community and its aspiring candidates. Explanations of change would, therefore, always be vulnerable to arguments for interest-maximizing calculations and the logic of consequences.<sup>151</sup> Europeanization, though, seems to be much more than that, as the extensive academic discussion on its normative dimension suggests. It is surprising then that this perspective has provided the major body of work on the effects of Europeanization in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

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<sup>148</sup> For an interesting take to that see for instance Milada Vachudová, 'The Leverage of International Institutions on Democratizing States: Eastern Europe and the European Union', *EUI Working Papers* 33 (2001) at [http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/WP-Texts/01\\_33.pdf](http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/WP-Texts/01_33.pdf).

<sup>149</sup> Insightful approach to the subject in Frank Schimmelfennig, 'International Socialization in the New Europe: Rational Action in an Institutional Environment', *European Journal of International Relations* 6 (1), (2000): 109-139, also Frank Schimmelfennig, *European Regional Organizations, Political Conditionality, and Democratic Transformation in Eastern Europe*, *EEPS* 21(1), (2007): 126-141, Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier (eds.) *The Politics of EU Enlargement: Theoretical Approaches* (Routledge, 2005).

<sup>150</sup> Even if it is treated as a 'rhetorical entrapment', following Schimmelfennig's thought-provoking argument, it is still a decision which was taken in view of the future new members, see Frank Schimmelfennig, 'The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the EU', *International Organization* 55 (1), (2001): 47-80.

<sup>151</sup> As formulated by March and Olsen in opposition to the logic of appropriateness. For an overview of the argument James March and Johan Olsen, 'The Logic of Appropriateness', *ARENA Working Papers* WP04 (2009) at [http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-publications/workingpapers/working-papers2004/wp04\\_9.pdf](http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-publications/workingpapers/working-papers2004/wp04_9.pdf).



This dissertation aims to contribute to the literature on Europeanization and change by investigating the impact of Europeanization from an angle that has largely been understudied so far: along relations between two candidate states. Placing the analysis on such a nexus offers the advantage of studying a relationship of equality. Under international law two sovereign states are equal, despite differences in size, stability and capability. Their international behaviour is equally legitimate as long as it remains within the law. So a change from enmity to amity in their bilateral relations should not be ascribed solely to external pressure, especially not if there has been no violation of international law. The reasons for a change in behaviour towards the 'Other' should also be sought domestically in changed political priorities within the state. This dissertation aims to demonstrate that change is related to a modified perception of the 'Other' in view of a transformed vision of 'Self'.

This perspective has not been widely explored so far. Of the few studies on Europeanization and change in this vein that have appeared, Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver's edited volume on European integration and national identity in the Norden<sup>152</sup> is one to stand out as taking a similar approach. The book's engaging analyses of the way the four Nordic states re-interpreted their national identity narratives to be able to relate to the EU have been particularly enlightening in demonstrating how narratives of the nation can successfully be accommodated into the Europeanization discourse. This is one way in which the volume is relevant to the current investigation. Another is its use of discourse as an analytical perspective. Focused on a traditionally peaceful region of Europe's, however, Hansen and Wæver's insightful book does not concern itself with the issue of reconciling conflictual national identities. The Balkans, unlike the Norden, showcase not only particular interpretations of national identity that are not necessarily 'European'. The region displays national identity narratives of increased conflictuality, which is reflected in bilateral relations between Balkan states. An investigation of their Europeanization needs to address these peculiarities. Although referring to the methodology and theoretical framework of Hansen and Wæver's volume, the theme and purpose of this dissertation lead along different analytical avenues.

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<sup>152</sup> Hansen and Wæver, *European Integration and National Identity*.

It is useful to distinguish yet another line of research on the effects of Europeanization outside the EU that is somehow related to this dissertation. An informative example of this is Bruno Coppieters' edited volume on Europe's role in solving secessionist cases from Europe's periphery (two of the cases are focused on states from the South Eastern parts of Europe).<sup>153</sup> Following the technicalities of conflict resolution, the contributors examine the necessary conditions for its success and Europeanization's potential to influence it. Again, the theme and purpose of the current study differ. It is interested in examining the way Europeanization influences narratives of national identity *before* they evolve into actual conflict. Understanding this influence has wider application to understanding conflictuality based in national identity. As pointed above, nationalism possesses an underlying conflictual potential, of which nationalist conflict is only the extreme case. Studying conflictual national identity narratives before conflict and investigating the mechanisms Europeanization discourse contains for their reconciliation therefore seems more relevant to the future of European integration.

### ***Exploring Identity Change in 'Europe'***

Embedded in an anti-essentialist ontological understanding of social reality and taking a reflectivist approach in investigating it, the current study sets out to identify change in an object that cannot be quantitatively measured: national identity. Conceptualizing national identity as a collection of stories (narratives) about the 'Self' and the 'Other' suggests the analytical starting point for investigating change. It should search into the way these stories are told in order to identify differences. The poststructuralist meta-theoretical framework of the investigation, in turn, demonstrates that meaning cannot be detached from the discursive reality within which it has been articulated. This is what leads the analysis of identity narratives to the dominant discourses which uphold them. Seeing national identity as the link between the individual and sovereign power points to the nation-state as the norm in modern statehood and to nationalism as the dominant

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<sup>153</sup> Bruno Coppieters (eds.) *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies from the European Periphery* (Gent: Academia Press, 2004).

discourse which upholds this norm. Nationalism is conceptualized here as a totalizing system of meaning which has provided some of the most salient interpretations of national identity narratives. Its hegemony, however, as in any discursive formation, is vulnerable to the social forces and political alternatives which it sought to exclude. Mobilizing these forces and upholding these alternatives as a promising political project, Europeanization came to challenge the hegemony of nationalism. Re-formulating the link between the community and sovereign-power, Europeanization upheld a different story of 'Self'. Within its totalizing system of meaning, national identity narratives appeared less antagonistic because of the different interpretation of the meaning of their signifiers. This investigation sets out to explore how articulations of these meanings changed in the course of Europeanization. Taking up key signifiers of the national story told by the state both domestically and externally, the analysis traces modifications in their discursive positions.

The transformations established suggest that Europeanization can offer a credible reading of national identity narratives which reduces their conflictual potential. It also ultimately stabilizes the discursive hegemony of Europeanization. Where the credibility of Europeanization's interpretation fails, the hegemony of nationalism is re-instated and antagonistic national identity narratives increase in salience. The conflict-reconciliation dialectic along national identity lines in Europe can therefore be significantly affected by the political relevance of Europeanization. This dissertation claims that the long-term future of integration in Europe depends on the credible reading of national identity narratives within the discourse of Europeanization. Reducing the antagonistic potential of national identity through an inclusive interpretation of its signifiers, the credibility of Europeanization's reading of stories of 'Self' and 'Other' also stabilizes the discursive hegemony of the Europeanization itself. This is what ensures the political relevance of the project of integration. The purpose of the following chapter is to lay out the conceptual frame within which this claim is argued.

### CHAPTER III

#### CONCEPTUAL FRAME:

##### DISCOURSE THEORY AND EXPLORING NATIONAL IDENTITY

The unifying frame of this dissertation is poststructuralist discourse theory. Able to account for the contingent character, conflictual potential and re-current political relevance of national identity, discourse theory also provides a powerful conceptualization of identity change. Approaching the study of social reality from a reflectivist epistemological perspective within the broader school of postmodernity, discourse theory denounces the restrictive function of clearcut definitions. Instead, it offers an exceptionally flexible theoretical framework able to account for the specificities of the other key concepts of this study, nationalism and Europeanization. A discursive conceptualization allows for fuller understanding of the interaction between nationalism and Europeanization, addressing the perpetual struggle between their competing interpretations of social reality. It also reveals the centrality of the issue of national identity accommodation for the future of Europeanization. Representing the key link between the individual and sovereign power, national identity is not only central within the discursive hegemony of nationalism. It also remains a key signifier of Europeanization, as the process of European integration continues to be constrained by nation-state sovereignty. So failure to provide a credible reading of national identity could restore the hegemony of nationalism, marginalize the discourse of Europeanization, reverse the integration dynamics in certain points, and in the long term perhaps dislocate it. A discursive approach further demonstrates that even though challenged by integration in Europe, the discourse of nationalism cannot be dislocated just yet because politics is organized upon the fundament of nationalism's upholding unit – the nation-state.

Therefore, a study of Europeanization's reading of national identity should take account of the discursive relevance of nationalism and operate within its constraints. Discourse theory's conceptualization of the perpetual over-determination of discursive reality in the dynamics of competing interpretations of it can address these constraints analytically and reveal their implications for politics. Together with the fact that discourse theory facilitates cross-disciplinary research and enables a multi-perspectival approach, these conceptual advantages confirm its suitability as a unifying frame for the purposes of this dissertation. This chapter aims to outline these advantages. First it briefly references several key discourse theory ideas which the dissertation operationalizes in its argumentation and investigation. Then it highlights the points where discourse theory's treatment of national identity promises better understanding of its peculiarities. The chapter concludes with presenting the applicability of discourse theory to developing the central argument of the dissertation.

### ***Discourse Theory and the Conceptualization of Discourse***

Discourse theory emerged as a 'cross-disciplinary attempt to integrate central insights from linguistics and hermeneutics with key ideas from social and political science [...], prompted by the growing recognition of the intertwining of language and politics in the process of societal transformation'<sup>154</sup>. The first generation of discourse theorists take as 'discourse' the textual unit.<sup>155</sup> It is interested in the semantic aspects of spoken and written text which are inevitably embedded within the historical context and its power hierarchies.<sup>156</sup> A second generation of discourse theorists expands the idea of 'discourse' beyond text in the strictly linguistic sense, to include a wider set of social practices 'as far as they contain a semiotic element'<sup>157</sup>. Theory in this vein demonstrates the influence of

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<sup>154</sup> Jacob Torfing, 'Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments and Challenges' in David Howarth and Jacob Torfing, *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 5.

<sup>155</sup> The three generations of discourse theory here follow the classification of Torfing, 'Discourse Theory.'

<sup>156</sup> William Downes, *Language and Society* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1984).

<sup>157</sup> As quoted by Torfing, 'Discourse Theory', 7. For a detailed presentation of this conceptualization see Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (Boston: Addison Wesley, 1995).

non-discursive relations on the 'rules of formation'<sup>158</sup> of discursive practices but is unclear about the exact distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive.<sup>159</sup> In his 'genealogical writings' Foucault distances himself from this 'quasi-structuralist'<sup>160</sup> account of discourse by investigating the hegemonic struggles which shape and re-shape discursive formations.<sup>161</sup> He demonstrates that understanding discourse is impossible without investigating the power relations which shaped it. A third generation of students of discourse completely abandon the unsustainable distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive<sup>162</sup> to theorize all social phenomena as 'discourse'. Within the philosophical frame developed by Derrida, everything becomes discourse.<sup>163</sup> The social world exists only in the infinite interplay of meaning, endlessly subverted and re-written in the clash of historical transformations and political interventions. In the work of Roland Barth, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, discourse is conceptualized as a relational system of signifying practices<sup>164</sup> which provides 'the contingent horizon'<sup>165</sup> for the construction of any meaningful object and subject.<sup>166</sup>

In contrast to Kant's classical transcendentalism, poststructuralist discourse theory argues that perception and experience of the empirical world are made possible not by some pre-given categories of the human mind but by conditions of possibility which are a structural feature of discourses.<sup>167</sup> It does not deny the reality of the empirical world, as criticism sometimes has it. It argues that our understanding of the world, the way we interpret what it signifies, is not a feature of existing reality but a feature of language. This is how

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<sup>158</sup> Seen as a remnant of his Marxist legacy, the term introduced by Foucault in Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>159</sup> Particularly Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989), also earlier Foucault (his 'archaeological' writings in Foucault, *Archaeology*, also Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception* (London: Psychology Press, 1976), etc.).

<sup>160</sup> Torfing, 'Discourse Theory', 7.

<sup>161</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, Vol. III (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

<sup>162</sup> Notably Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).

<sup>163</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>164</sup> Torfing, *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Torfing points out that a similar analytical outcome is reached by Wittgenstein in 1953, though following a different analytical path: Torfing, *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>167</sup> Torfing, *ibid.*, 9.

poststructuralist discourse theory conceptualizes 'discursive truth regimes'.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, as suggested by the claim for plurality of truth regimes, the meanings of social objects cannot be fixed around one pre-given self-determining centre. They are non-referential and emerge as a result of relating the different social objects to each other. The identities of the social subjects are constructed on the basis of these established discursive relations. Their formation is therefore relational, contextual and historically contingent.

Influenced by British post-Marxism<sup>169</sup>, French poststructuralism<sup>170</sup>, and Anglo-American debates about postmodernity<sup>171</sup>, Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau develop a synthetic political theory of discourse which offers a compelling framework for analyzing the political.<sup>172</sup> Among other things, its contribution for understanding the dialectic of social antagonisms in constituting political reality<sup>173</sup> has remained unchallenged. Operationalized into a full-fledged methodology by researchers such as Margareth Wetherell, Ruth Wodak, Ole Wæver, discourse theory has proven its analytical potential for the study of politics.<sup>174</sup> This dissertation operationalizes several key ideas of poststructuralist discourse by incorporating them into the main argument. Their conceptualization, together with their relevance to the investigation, will be clarified in the following paragraphs.

### *Signifiers*

Discourses as systems of signification are formed around certain 'privileged' nodal points<sup>175</sup> which enable partial fixation of meaning. They are called signifiers. The meaning

<sup>168</sup> Torfing, *ibid.*, 13, see also Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe, and Žižek* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

<sup>169</sup> The intellectual wave produced in the 1970s translating Gramsci's political writings into English, see Mike Prior and Dave Purdy, *Out of the Ghetto: a Path to Socialist Rewards* (Spokesman, 1979) at <http://www.hegemonics.co.uk/docs/OutoftheGhetto.pdf>.

<sup>170</sup> Notably, the work of Derrida.

<sup>171</sup> Useful overview of the main ideas and problems in Agger, 'Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism'.

<sup>172</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (New York: Verso, 2005), Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2007), etc.

<sup>173</sup> E.g. Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000).

<sup>174</sup> Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, *Mapping the Language of Racism* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester/ Wheatsheaf, 1992); Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl and Karin Liebhart, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Ole Wæver, 'The language of Foreign Policy', Review Essay of Walter Carlsnaes's 'Ideology and Foreign Policy: Problems of Comparative Conceptualization', *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (3), (1990): 335-343.

<sup>175</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 112.

of all objects within discourse is organized in relation to these central knots of meaning in such a way that the signifiers represent the discourse and carry its totalizing power. But since there is no meaning outside discourse, the knots of meaning are tied around nothing – the signifiers are empty. Their meaning emerges as a result of its absence. Laclau exemplifies this notion with the Hobbesian state of nature:

*“[I]n a situation of radical disorder, order is present as that which is absent; it becomes an empty signifier as the signifier of its absence.”*<sup>176</sup>

Emptiness is a necessary condition of the signifier. It can become the centre of an emerging discourse precisely because it signifies what is missing, and thus, what is needed. Only when this condition is met, can political forces compete to present their political objectives as those which carry the contents of the empty signifier. This conceptualization of the emergence of discourses demonstrates their embeddedness in the historical contexts which called them into existence and their dependence on the dominant political forces which shaped them. Seeing the discourse of nationalism from this perspective helps reveal in its centre the narrative of nationhood, which is what all types of nationalist discourses have in common, irrespective of their characteristic features. It also helps address the principal primordialist/ modernist fault line in Nationalism Studies. Since discourses emerge around one privileged nodal point, then it was the signifier of the nation which called into existence the discourse of nationalism. But the nation signified nothing. Its *absence* is what enabled competing political projects to fill the signifier with contents, thus constituting it as ‘a nation’. The same dynamics can be seen in the formation of the discourse of Europeanization. It is organized around the signifier of ‘Europe’. It was precisely ‘Europe’ as a community of like-minded states sharing common goals and values that was absent in the aftermath of two destructive global wars which tore the Old Continent apart. The project of European integration provided the much needed contents of this signifier, which upheld the discourse of Europeanization and constructed the states in Europe as the selected national participants in a unique supranational structure. A discursive perspective also reveals the basis of antagonism

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<sup>176</sup> Ernesto Laclau, ‘Why do empty signifiers matter to politics?’ in Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996): 36-46, 44.



between the two discourses. They struggle for hegemony over the interpretation of one and the same discursive element: national identity. The centrality of national identity is determined by its function of translating the meaning of the central signifiers of both discourses at the personal level.

### *Totalization*

The precise meaning or 'filling' of the signifiers is ultimately determined through acts of political intervention based on the social antagonisms and the struggles for power within the particular historical constellation.<sup>177</sup> They are performed through discursive practices establishing relations between various discursive elements<sup>178</sup>. But since there is no other reference point, no 'determining centre'<sup>179</sup>, meaning is fixed arbitrarily by excluding all other possible meanings. This act of 'radical institution'<sup>180</sup> of the signifiers upholding the discursive formation reveals the direct mutually constitutive relation between discourses and power, conceptualized initially by Foucault.<sup>181</sup> The powerful revolutionary potential of popular discontent which brought down absolutist monarchy with the French Revolution asserted the belief that sovereign power should lie with the people. Ruling in the name of the people required that the people be able to speak in one voice and agree, i.e. they had to be a community. The specific historical context of the time suggested their constitution as a national community. The empowered discourse of 'the nation' re-enforced the belief in popular sovereignty and turned self-determination and civic (liberal) nationalism into a norm. The link between power and discourse can be uncovered also within the discourse of Europeanization. European integration was a project of the winners in the war. True, it depended on the participation of the two defeated but the subtext of their participation was 'domestication'. It continued to represent victory with the breakup

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<sup>177</sup> These interventions poststructuralist discourse theory calls 'articulations' (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*) building on Foucault's idea of discourses as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, *Archaeology*, 49).

<sup>178</sup> Laclau and Mouffe make the distinction between elements and 'moments' – they position 'elements' outside the discursive formation in question, while the signs within it they call 'moments' (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*).

<sup>179</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> As noted in David Howarth, Aletta Norval, Yannis Stavrakakis, *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change* (Manchester University Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>181</sup> In the 'archaeologies'.

of communism and the powerful hegemony it established in Europe: the excluded had to apply for admission into the group of victors, comply with their requirements and change accordingly. The pulling power of Europeanization had left them no other viable political alternatives.

Power within discourse, however, depends on the stability of the discursive formation. The discursive stabilization of meaning is possible only through the exclusion of alternative options. In this sense discourse is a reduction of possibilities. To be able to prevent the perpetual 'sliding'<sup>182</sup> of the signifiers against the signifieds and to exclude the infinite number of meanings they can carry, discourses always strive to achieve what Laclau calls ideological totalization,<sup>183</sup> or complete closure. This is an attempt to deny the contingent character of social reality by creating political myths essentializing its boundaries. The narratives of nationhood linking the existence of the nation to primordial times and organic kinship illustrate one such attempt. The more recent narratives of European integration, designed to exclude the possibility of war, illustrate another.

### *Field of Discursivity*

Laclau and Mouffe conceptualize the possibilities excluded from discourse as forming a field of discursivity<sup>184</sup>. The field of discursivity contains all the meanings signifiers within discourse could have or have had but are now excluded as available options. In this sense, it functions as a 'reservoir' of the possible. Laclau and Mouffe do not focus on the particular structure or organizing order of the field of discursivity while others<sup>185</sup> problematize it and suggest a distinction between all possible meanings and the possible meanings struggling for the same discursive terrain. A finite range of discourses, for example, offer divergent interpretations of the signifier of sovereignty. Absolutism, offers one contents for the signifier, which in Europe is ascribed to the past. Alternatives could be found in the discourses of nationalism, Europeanization, furthermore in ethnicity,

<sup>182</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 87.

<sup>183</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996), 56.

<sup>184</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *ibid.*, 111.

<sup>185</sup> Marianne Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: Sage, 2002).

religion.<sup>186</sup> In its entirety, the field of discursivity contains the full potential for political change.

What enables meanings articulated by alternative discourses, which Laclau and Mouffe call 'floating signifiers', to enter the discursive space is the occurrence of an event or phenomenon which discourse cannot accommodate within its system of signification. The hegemonic discourse cannot represent it, explain it or otherwise 'domesticate' it. The presence of floating signifiers subverts discourse's carrying signifiers by revealing their arbitrary nature. It opens up the realm of the political for competing political projects articulating alternative interpretations of social reality and establishing alternative relations between its elements. The inhumanity of Nazi excesses presented the discourse of European nationalism with such an uncomfortable phenomenon. Its incomprehensibility threatened the symbolic order established in Europe. To prevent complete breakdown, the discourse of nationalism transformed dramatically. It excluded ethno-nationalist interpretations of state sovereignty as illegitimate and marginalized civic-nationalist interpretations to re-articulate them in terms of liberal democratic values. The marginalization of nationalist political rhetoric encouraged alternative visions of state sovereignty in Europe, notably based on functionalist and federalist ideas, to enter the discursive space of nationalism and challenge its reading of social reality. This historical condition of possibility enabled the emergence of the grand discourse of Europeanization. It did not dislocate nationalism, but it managed to challenge nationalism's hegemony.

Dislocation of the entire system of meaning is possible because discourse emerges on the basis of excluding alternative meanings. There is no other pre-given essence to it. Its totality is illusory: discourse can never achieve full closure because it exists through what it attempts to deny. The meaning of objects in discourse is therefore only partially fixed. It always depends on the 'otherness' it excludes and needs to be constantly over-determined in relation to it. This perpetuates the eternal struggle for hegemony over meaning, which forms the basis of political power.

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<sup>186</sup> This limited range of discourses can be subsumed under the notion of 'order of discourse' theorized by Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

*Identities in Discourse*

The identities of the social subjects in discourse emerge in the same dynamics. They can never achieve 'fullness'<sup>187</sup> because their existence depends on the excluded 'Other'. Thus, the subject in discourse is always split.<sup>188</sup> It strives to achieve totality by acts of identification, re-producing the boundaries of the discourse within which it can find relative stability. The national subject, for instance, is usually constituted on the basis of the signifiers of territory, language, custom, culture, past and purpose, whose function is to differentiate him/ her from all 'other' national subjects. The 'Other(s)' are positioned in *a chain of equivalence*, identified and identifiable only by their national 'otherness', which enables defining the national 'Self(ves)'. Their differential subjectivity as national subjects is articulated in *a chain of difference* from the 'Self(ves)'. The articulation and over-determination of the logics of equivalence and difference aims to essentialize the subject positions. Such articulation is ultimately a discursive strategy. Any attempt to uncover its 'real' essence subverts the very act of identification by revealing the emptiness upon which it is based. Then an opposing dynamics is initiated which re-positions the 'Self' in *a chain of equivalence* with the 'Other(s)'. These opposing logics constantly over-determine the subject positions against a background of undecideability<sup>189</sup> and prevent their ultimate fixation within discourse. They reveal that there exists no pre-given centre of subjectivity preceding the subject's identification: no 'concealed identity to be rescued beyond the latter'<sup>190</sup>. The identity of the subject is uncovered only through its discursive over-determination. So the history of its transformations should be analyzed in the 'Self'- 'Other' dialectic and within the discourses determining it.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990).

<sup>188</sup> Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>189</sup> Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 32f.

<sup>190</sup> Chantal Mouffe, 'Citizenship and Political Identity', 28.

<sup>191</sup> Mouffe, *ibid.* 28.

### ***Analytical Advantages of Studying National Identity Change through Discourse Theory***

As noted in Chapter II, social identity has traditionally been conceptualized on the basis of sociological and psychological theories of self-identification and categorization. They have been very influential in theorizing membership into social groups and the social implications of membership for the individual and the social.<sup>192</sup> Their insights have been extremely useful in understanding the dynamics of group behaviour and inter-group relations, as well as in understanding the socio-cognitive aspects of group maintenance. These contributions have been valuable for the study of national identity and nationalism. But seeing the processes of identification and categorization as a natural cognitive reaction of the human mind, they focus their explanations at the micro-level of individual psychology. They cannot go beyond the structural constraints of the human mind, thus overlooking the constitutive power of the social on the way human mind processes reality. Their explanations therefore essentialize the categories they attempt to address. Discourse theory offers a broader conceptualization of identity formation which can account for its specificities at the micro level but adds to it the important social dimension at the macro level, revealing the central link between identity constitution and political power.<sup>193</sup>

Discourse theory's conceptualization of identity is both disturbing and profoundly optimistic. On the one hand, it argues that subjectivity is contingent upon meanings fixated in an ultimately arbitrary fashion, which invalidates the very claim of subjectivity. On the other hand, it upholds the belief in perpetual change, which represents a promise against dissipation. Thinking of national identity as impossible outside the discourses which (re-)construct it offers an understanding of its malleable nature, its ever-present occurrence, its over-arching significance, and its attraction as a political project. It also proves useful in

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<sup>192</sup> Hogg, 'A Tale of Two Theories', 259.

<sup>193</sup> Social Identity Theory also touches upon the responsivity of group identity to the social contexts (intergroup competition and mobility) but its explanations attempt to establish linear causality and in effect essentialize the categories they operationalize, as pointed by Clare Sutherland in the context of analyzing nationalism, see Clare Sutherland, 'Nation-building through Discourse Theory', *Nations and Nationalism* 11 (2), (2005): 185-202, 186.

addressing the political interventions attempting to articulate its meaning in a hegemonic manner, uncovering the mechanisms for its discursive transformations.

### *Function vs Definition*

In the first place, discourse theory marginalizes the academic discussion on defining nation and nationhood as irrelevant to grasping the significance of national identity. There is nothing to be defined since national identity can be everything. Its meaning is determined by the discourse which upholds it. Within the discourse of nationalism nation is the community of people which legitimizes the sovereign power of the state. It is determined as an integral element in the organization of the political world into nation-states. It is not coincidental that the terms 'nation' and 'state' are often used interchangeably. Theoretically speaking this is, of course, imprecise. Even though both terms are closely related through the claims each makes on geographical space, history, collective agency and political culture (including forms of government, institutions, legal traditions), 'nation' refers to the community of people, while 'state' refers to the institutional body that claims monopoly of legitimate force over a particular territory.<sup>194</sup> But the link between the community of people on a particular territory and the claims for legitimacy of the institutional body monopolizing force there, is the notion of collective will, action and purpose. This link has become the rationale behind the state system existing from Westphalia to today. Within the discourse of nationalism, which determined its stability, it has acquired such a fundamental, deeply-seated quality that it is reflected in the very language of both politics and science. The discipline and practice of what we call today 'international relations', for instance, should be better described by the phrase 'inter-state relations'. The misnomers of the 'League of Nations' and its modern equivalent the 'United Nations' also refer to inter-state organizations *per se*.<sup>195</sup> It is not surprising then that ordinary speech often uses the two terms interchangeably. This use should be taken into account when analyzing national identity, despite its theoretical imprecision, because it is

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<sup>194</sup> Following Weber's classical definition, see Weber, 'Politics as Vocation' in Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1970), 78.

<sup>195</sup> This observation is not original but is particularly precise. For other references to it, see Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, also Özkırımlı, *Contemporary Debates*, David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1995), etc.

an inevitable feature of the hegemonic discourse of nationalism. But if the link between 'nation' and 'state' were broken and the notions of collective will, action and purpose were re-interpreted elsewhere, then national identity would come to signify something else. The discourse of Europeanization offers such an alternative vision of nationhood and statehood, so it inevitably affects the way national identity is interpreted.

### *Always Antagonistic vs 'Good' and 'Bad' Identities*

Second, discourse theory succeeds where mainstream accounts of nationalism have been ambivalent. It reveals in an affirmative manner the inevitable antagonistic potential of national identity and its pervasive conflictuality in Europe. Despite its significant peculiarities, the discursive construction of national identity follows the same dual logic as the construction of any other social identity in discourse. It requires the establishment of chains of difference between the national subject and its 'Other(s)' through discursive strategies of articulation that aim to essentialize the boundaries between them. Articulation involves practices of exclusion and over-determination, which perpetuate the tension between the infinity of possible meanings and the particular discursive interpretation. It re-affirms the boundaries between national subjects in an attempt to stabilize their identities despite the lack of essence to the logic of difference, because a revelation of the equivalence between the 'Self' and its 'Other(s)' will threaten the subjectivity of both. The practice of identity constitution, therefore, in itself generates conflictuality. In the context of national identity constitution in particular, this has already been noted by students of discourse theory and international relations. Michael Shapiro conceptualizes foreign policy with its focus on border maintenance as making an 'Other'.<sup>196</sup> Taking up this idea, David Campbell applies it to his study of Bosnia to demonstrate the 'othering' potential of foreign policy in identity formation.<sup>197</sup> Overall, analyses in this vein reveal the intrinsic antagonistic quality of 'inter-national' relations within the discourse of nationalism. This is what justified the attention of this study to national identity narratives reflected in conflictual bilateral relations.

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<sup>196</sup> Michael Shapiro (1988) quoted by Iver Neumann, 'Self and Other in IR', *European Journal of International Relations* 2 (2), (1996): 139-74, 156.

<sup>197</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security*.

The antagonism of inter-national relations within the discourse of nationalism is re-enforced in a context of physical proximity. This is determined by the immediate availability of neighbouring regions and states as a source of narratives of 'otherness'. Out of all possible meanings, it is the ones that struggle for the same discursive space that form what Fairclough theorized as the order of discourse.<sup>198</sup> In view of national identity interpretations, neighbouring states and states in the same region struggle for the same discursive space in the mutually constitutive dynamics of identity formation.<sup>199</sup> This conditions increased conflictuality of national identity in neighbour-state relations within the discourse of nationalism. The post-communist period in the Balkans illustrates this. This is how analytical interest in conflictual national identity guided this study to bilateral relations of two Balkan states.

In addition to physical proximity (and often in relation to it), national identity articulation and determination may generate greater conflictuality, if it is upheld by one or several similar signifiers. Similarity in identity re-enforces the antagonism inherent to identity construction as it subverts the credibility of the chains of difference. Bulgaria and Macedonia, for instance, centred their national identity constructs around belonging to parts of the same geographical region, overlapping historical narratives and very similar languages. Articulation practices in both states then needed to find and re-instate a border separating the two identities in a categorical manner despite similarities. This imperative increases the conflictuality of 'othering'<sup>200</sup> and is reflected in bilateral relations.

States in Europe, as Anthony Smith observed<sup>201</sup>, are more similar than different. Despite the numerous specificities in their national trajectories, all of them, albeit to varying degrees and over different periods of time, have shared into the fundamental traditions of Europe: Roman law, political democracy, parliamentary institutions, Judeo-Christian ethics,

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<sup>198</sup> Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

<sup>199</sup> In a completely different context, Freud called this dynamics 'the narcissism of minor differences' (see Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), pp. 58-63. The apt phrase, utilised in the philosophical elaborations of Lacan and later Žižek and applied to international relations and politics by writers such as Michael Ignatieff, designates the threat that closeness in identity can pose on the self-identification of the state.

<sup>200</sup> I.e., the strategy of 'making an other' as per Campbell, *Writing Security*.

<sup>201</sup> Smith, 'National Identity and the Idea of European Unity', 68.



Renaissance humanism, rationalism and empiricism, and romanticism and classicism.<sup>202</sup> Together with their physical proximity, this contributes to increased conflictual potential of the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic narrated within the discourse of nationalism. Indeed, the numerous conflicts which marked the era of its hegemony in Europe culminating in the two world wars, are evidence of that.

### *Negotiable vs Fixed*

In the third place, discourse theory demonstrates that discursive spaces can change. Their boundaries are subject to perpetual re-negotiation against competing interpretations of reality. The identities they perpetuate can also change, depending on the re-definition of 'otherness' against which they have been constituted. As emphasized, this is decided in the struggles for power which ultimately re-organize the political. Re-defining national identity in a reconciliatory manner therefore lies within the realm of the political and is subject to discursively re-positioning its 'Other(s)'. The discursive strategies that bring about such re-positioning affect the subjects and objects of national identity narratives, the contents of their signifiers, the signifying practices and rules which articulate meaning, the discursive boundaries within which narratives of identity operate. Understanding these is the key to analyzing national identity change.

Discourse theory's conceptualization of change is therefore able to address the reconciliatory effects of European integration on national identity narratives interpreted in a conflictual manner. Empowering a grand discourse of commonality of interest, purpose and practice, integration challenged the hegemony of nationalism in Europe as it profoundly re-formulated the meanings of its key signifiers. Within the discursive space of commonality opened up by Europeanization, the discursive positions of 'Self' and 'Other' perpetuate a completely new dialectic. The national 'Self(ves)' do not seek their constitutive 'Other(s)' beyond national borders because Europeanization transforms the meaning of national borders and their function. Within 'Europe' borders no longer divide but connect nation-states. In this sense they cease to demarcate the limit between national 'Self' and 'Other', which gradually decrease conflictuality along these lines.

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<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

Instead, Europeanization shifts the limit between 'Self' and 'Other' to the borders demarcating the supra-national space of 'Europe', i.e. to the borders of the European Community. These new borders come to represent the new fault lines of conflictuality generated in the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic. They enable the constitution of the European 'Self(ves)' and inevitably call into existence (a) new necessary 'Other(s)'. In the space of commonality upheld by the discourse of Europeanization the national subjects are re-positioned as members of the same community by discursively re-enforcing similarities and marginalizing differences between them. Re-narrating national identity in these terms reduces its antagonistic potential in Europe and in turn stabilizes the discursive space upholding the modified narratives.

### *Recurring vs Anachronistic*

Finally, discourse theory can help understand the ever-recurring salience of national identity in a political world organized into nation-states. Upholding the discursive hegemony of nationalism, national identity is indispensable within it. Indeed, opening any newspaper, we come across references to 'the' government, 'our' taxes, 'their' measures in dealing with disaster. These 'homeland deixis' as Billig calls them<sup>203</sup> habitually refer to 'us' as a unique self-evident community separated from the rest of the world by borders. Perpetually constituted through the rhetoric of national identity and essentialized in the discourse of nationalism, this community provides a fundamental source of self-identification with the social which is always already there. The link to sovereign power and the level of sedimentation of the symbolic order it constitutes differentiate national identity from other sources of collective identity, making it binding and impossible to renounce. This testifies for the un-diminishing attraction of national identity rhetoric as a strategy of political mobilization: it is directed at a largest possible audience and it reaches its addressees in a manner that is both personal and obligatory.

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<sup>203</sup> As strategies of rhetorical 'pointing', Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 105.

### ***Applicability of Discourse Theory to Understanding the Role of National Identity in Europe***

The discourse of nationalism was challenged by the unintelligible violence it endorsed. This opened up its discursive space to imagining a political alternative for realizing statehood: integration in Europe. Emerging as an ethically superior discourse – because it signified peace – Europeanization provided alternative meanings to the signifier of sovereignty, thus modifying the link between statehood and nationhood. Its model for pooling sovereignty in selected areas and transferring it to the supranational level constituted a new model of governance transcending the boundaries of national statehood. But it also required the constitution of ‘the people’ it governed as a community in order to be legitimate. In attempting to do so it reached beyond national borders to call upon a community of ‘European states’. So it set out to modify the meaning of both statehood and nationhood within the discourse of nationalism. Destabilizing nationalism’s upholding signifiers, integration attempted to organize meanings around its own centre – ‘Europe’ – and achieve totality. Europeanization’s reading of nationalism’s central signifier – national identity – then became crucial to its empowerment, since it could potentially dislocate the hegemonic discourse. Radically re-determining ‘otherness’, Europeanization re-arranged the elements of the established discursive hegemony, enabling the initial success of the European project.

One structural feature of the discourse of nationalism, however, remained unchallenged by Europeanization, conditioning its pervasive relevance. The process of integration began and developed within the constraints of the nation-state(s). The European project modified the notion of nation-state sovereignty by creating the vision of the common European ‘home’ but did not provide an immediate political alternative to it. Integration continued to operate within the limits of nation-state sovereignty. The complete dislocation of the discourse of nationalism, whose centre nation-state sovereignty formed, was therefore not possible. This suggests that as long as European integration is constrained by the nation-state(s), it will need to be able to provide a credible reading of

national identity (a floating signifier), in order to challenge the hegemonic interpretations of national identity within the discourse of nationalism. Failure to do so might eventually problematize integration all together. Bound by the organizing unit of the nation-state, if only partially, states in Europe could still revert to conflictuality, should 'Europe's reading of their national stories become irrelevant.

### *Narrating National Identity*

Reading national identity in a credible manner within the discourse of Europeanization follows exactly the same mechanisms as within the discourse of nationalism. There is no other way to achieve totality in identity but to constantly over-determine subject positions against 'Other(s)'.<sup>204</sup> In order to conceal their 'precarious' nature<sup>205</sup> and to essentialize the contingent limits of their world, social subjects perpetuate the narration of myths which (attempt to) ideologically 'totalize' and close the discursive space, thus also partially fixing identities within its contours. The attraction of the narrated myths depends on their credibility in reading past, present and future. They are the basis of political action because they enable interpellation (the 'hailing' of social subjects<sup>206</sup>) and political mobilization. The challenge before Europeanization consists in the taken-for-granted credibility of the story of nationhood. One of the most powerful myths of our time, this story offers a source of self-identification which significantly differs from other sources of collective identity.

In a different theoretical frame, David Miller provided a checklist of nations' distinguishing characteristics, which highlights some of the reasons for the credibility of the nationhood narratives.<sup>207</sup> The first among them is the fact that nations are communities constituted by a shared belief that they exist. It is not sufficient that I see myself as belonging to a distinct, as the example goes, Cornish nation. Other people must think of their Cornish identity in the same way. This dependency of national identity upon the social collectivity it is

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<sup>204</sup> It seems appropriate to clarify here that this over-determination is not seen as a consciously guided process, even though it is ultimately carried out by human individuals through language. It is, rather, embedded within the social and shaped by the power struggles of the historical time, which eventually decide its course.

<sup>205</sup> Mouffe, 'Citizenship and Political Identity', 28.

<sup>206</sup> Lacan's notion developing Althusser's conceptualization of the ideological subject, see Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 170.

<sup>207</sup> Miller, *On Nationality*, 22-27.

ascribed to is what distinguishes it from the other powerful source of collective self-identification – religion. It is a form of self-identification that cannot be made individually: the choices are to a large extent pre-given and, once made, binding. This dependency works the other way around too: nationhood cannot be renounced by considerations of the current generation because it is a community that is not defined by the present situation. Rather, it stretches back and forward across time and overrides other allegiances that may appear more ‘real’ because they are based on face-to-face contact between members (such as professional associations or teams). This is the second distinguishing characteristic of nations. The third is that the story of the nation constitutes an active identity: nations are communities that act together, take decisions together, are a source of agency. This is unlike other very powerful but ‘passive’ sources of self-identification, such as religion<sup>208</sup> or race, and is what has established the nation as the principal source of political legitimacy in the modern state system. The fourth important characteristic of nations that distinguishes them from other myths is the connection they establish between the collectivity and a particular geographical place: the homeland. It is precisely this characteristic that has forged the link between nations and states and is in the basis of the claim that the world we live in is a world of nations.<sup>209</sup> The fifth distinguishing characteristic Miller lists is common public culture. That includes a wide range of shared elements from national character to political principles, which provide an identifiable source of commonality but at the same time leave room for private culture to flourish. This characteristic provides such a broad and malleable fundament that a large number of people can easily identify with it, despite the numerous differences they consciously observe among each other. Therefore, the story of the nation is distinguished by at least five key characteristics that bind the individual who identifies with it in ways s/he cannot independently renounce or subscribe to and link him/her in important ways to the political, legal and cultural order of the modern world. This is what explains the credibility of the nationhood narrative as a source of collective identity and the hegemony of the discourse of nationalism which it perpetuates.

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<sup>208</sup> Even though religious communities can be mobilized for action, they follow an external source of will (the deity) whereas nations act in their own name, as Miller notes (Miller, *ibid.*, 24).

<sup>209</sup> As observed by Billig, cited above: the practice of politics and ordinary speech confirm his claim.

*Re-Narrating National Identity within Europeanization*

To be able to offer a credible alternative reading, the discourse of Europeanization needs to address these key characteristics of national identity in a convincing manner. Otherwise it would not be able to establish a legitimate basis for its hegemony. Unsurprisingly, this is what the most sceptical critics of Europeanization point to: the 'democratic deficit' of the Community. To a large extent European integration upholds a collective identity that is already a source of agency. European citizenship, enabling participation in European elections, has made that possible. However, the symbolic link between voting and governance is broken by the non-electability of the European institutions which actually govern in the way national governments do.<sup>210</sup> Within the narrow context of electability, Europeanization cannot compete with nationalism's relevance on this point. What it can do is foster 'European' norms and rules of governance which are translatable at the national level. Liberal democracy and its political practices have been articulated as such signifiers of 'European-ness'. Asserting their significance affects the type of agency national identity offers and increases its credibility as a positive source of identity.

European integration has already established in a categorical manner a connection between the community of people and the geographical space they inhabit. The common market, the common borders, border management and control policies instituted this connection politically. The common geographical space of 'Europe', however, has not been constituted at a personal level as a symbolic 'homeland' in the way it has within the national space. In view of nationalism's salient interpretations of territory as 'national', Europeanization can attempt to modify the salience of certain elements in the interpretation of territory that have lesser symbolic value than others. Borders, for example, represent such elements. Working on the practical significance of borders' permeability to the functioning of everyday life at the micro level, Europeanization has been able to significantly increase the symbolic value of open borders and shared national territories. This has become one important element of 'European' national identity narratives and has increased their credibility.

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<sup>210</sup> A re-formulation of that link might remedy this fault, despite the enormous political investment risk it involves, as the fate of the European Constitutional Treaty demonstrated.

Where European discourse offers probably most convincing interpretation of national identity is Miller's fifth point. Common public culture is the area where public narratives are officially converging to over-determine the 'European-ness' of culture as a signifier of civilizational achievement.<sup>211</sup> This is illustrated in the active promotion of Europe's political values, of its achievements in the realm of the common market, as well as of its cultural contribution *per se*. Reverting to the national cultural denominator occurs occasionally and only in specific domestic contexts.<sup>212</sup> In general, European public cultural space provides a source of commonality which can be easily adopted at the personal level, thus establishing the indispensable link between the micro- and macro-level which national culture does, but replacing it with the ethically superior narrative of the wider common ground. Europeanization's emphasis on preserving cultural difference as a European asset itself has greatly facilitated the 'European' reading of the signifier of culture.

Outside the cultural, though, European integration as a source of collective self-identification has, so far, been optional. Despite its readily availability, subjects may choose to subscribe to it or not. Renouncing 'European' identity is made possible by the uncertainty in which it positions its subjects. Faith in its existence has not been articulated in a hegemonic manner, and both politics and academia have had a role in that. Articulating the integration project as representative of the entire continent and not just selected states could help reduce the optional quality of Europeanization. Emphasizing its normative superiority as an inclusive community, Europeanization could increase its political relevance both within its current boundaries and outside. Particularly in the context of regions troubled by identity-based antagonisms (such as the Western Balkans) Europeanization could provide sufficient incentives to demonstrate its inclusive character and highlight its relevance to domestic politics, which is the primary locus of articulating national identity. Academic effort, in turn, could abandon the futile duality between 'national' and 'European' identity and focus on 'European national identity(ies)' instead to reveal the effects of European integration on re-narrating nationhood in Europe.

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<sup>211</sup> The empirical data and conclusions in Sifft et al., 'Segmented Europeanization' suggests the logic of this dynamics.

<sup>212</sup> Pertti Alasuutari offers an interesting perspective on the reasons behind this trend in his study of Finnish 'culturespeak', embedding his explanation in the trends for globalization, see Pertti Alasuutari, 'Art, Entertainment, Culture, and Nation', *Critical Methodologies*, 1, (2001):157-184.

One characteristic of the Europeanization discourse, however, can potentially compromise its ability to significantly challenge nationalist interpretations of national identity, even though it is precisely this characteristic that has accounted for much of the success of the European project. Europeanization was meant to enable transcending past antagonisms. In this sense its focus is inevitably on the possibilities of the present at the expense of the past. The community it constitutes is future-oriented (realizing the possible), unlike the national community which is past-oriented (perpetuating the given). This is why membership in it can be individually renounced by considerations of the current generation – it is still subject to negotiation. To be able to reach out to the past, Europeanization discourse needs to deliberately focus on re-interpreting nationhood narratives in such a way as to highlight commonality and marginalize conflictuality. Though painful because of the traumas it might unearth, the enterprise is essential for the ‘imagining’ of the community of Europe as ‘real’. Inevitably, such efforts have already attempted to re-narrate European identities in a compatible manner but the deep sedimentation of national narratives within the discursive contours of nationalism has prevented significant progress in view of the chronological disadvantage of Europeanization.

Overall, Europeanization’s ability to produce floating signifiers capable of ‘capturing’ the signifiers of nationalism around these key points and filling them with different meanings is what determines its credibility in reading national identity. Ultimately, this also determines the future of the project of Europe. Failure could over-determine and stabilize nationalist discourse, and re-position the national subjects as the sole referents of sovereign power. If, however, Europeanization succeeds in reading national identity as the link between the individual and sovereign power at the supranational level, then it has the credible chance to marginalize nationalist interpretations and achieve hegemony. The greatest gain of this outcome would be reducing identity-based conflictuality in Europe.

### *The Hegemonic Struggle around National Identity*

This takes us back to the central claim of this study. National identity is inherently antagonistic, particularly in the context of commonality. It will always resist its constitutive



'Other(s)' in order to preserve its totality. The only way to transcend this antagonism is by challenging the hegemony of the discourse of nationalism which upholds it as its central signifier. Instituting supranational governance as another locus of sovereign power, the project of European integration attempted to do precisely that. By broadening the perimeter of the collective 'Self', Europeanization discourse dramatically re-positioned the national subjects and re-defined the category of 'otherness', so as to make national identities in Europe more inclusive and ultimately less 'national'. This is what suggests Europeanization's potential to shift the axis of antagonisms beyond the 'European' space, to reconcile previously conflictual national identities, and to stabilize its own discursive space by perpetuating their national narratives in a credible manner. Caught within the borders of the nation-state, however, national identity perpetuates the discourse of nationalism through the link it establishes between the collectivity of the people and sovereign power. As long as Europeanization operates within these constraints, it will perpetually compete for hegemony with nationalism. Providing a credible reading of national identity, as the source of collective self-identification linking modified sovereign power back to the collectivity of the governed people, will therefore become the touchstone of its success.

Discourse theory enables us to explore this hegemonic struggle by revealing the mechanisms of empowering and dislocating discourses. Pointing to the political forces and antagonisms which compete for hegemonic interpretation of the meaning of social phenomena, discourse theory uncovers the centrality of national identity for legitimizing and exercising sovereign power. Through the link to sovereignty, the process of articulating national identity becomes fundamental to realizing any political project. This is what suggests the significance of accommodating the national narratives within the project of European integration. Investigating the discursive mechanisms of this accommodation shows that Europeanization marginalizes conflictual narrative interpretations and fosters commonality. Thus it increases the credibility of the national narratives as a positive source of collective self-identification and enhances their political relevance. Stabilized through them, the discursive space of Europeanization becomes hegemonic, perpetuating the political relevance of the project of European integration. Through its focus on constituting

and articulating meaning, discourse theory helps investigate this dynamics. This is what proves its applicability to the research goals of this study.

### ***Original Research Contribution to the Study of National Identity in Europe***

In order to better understand the role of national identity in Europe from this perspective, the current investigation sought a context for studying the interaction between divergent interpretations of national identity narratives. The project of EU enlargement to the former communist states provided such context. Expanding the European project to the so called 'New' Europe required imagining sovereign power as supranational, thus creating the imperative of re-telling the national stories to allow for this new political reality. Compromised through their communist past and uncertain about their political future, national identities in the former communist states did not provide convincing sources of collective subjectivity at the state level. This created a condition of possibility for empowering the discourse of Europeanization and initiated its rivalry with the hegemony of nationalism.

It is on the basis of these assumptions that the current study selected as its object of analysis conflictual national identity narratives in the relations between two candidate member states: Bulgaria and Macedonia. Of all applicant countries, it chose to study two states from the Balkans because of the increased political relevance of nationalism and the increased conflictuality of national identity narratives in the region. Following the way national identity narratives transform in the context of empowering Europeanization, the analysis set out to establish modifications in the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic conditioning conflictuality and the effects these modifications had on stabilizing discursive hegemony. Tracing the evolution of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations confirms that where Europeanization succeeded in providing credible alternative readings of national identity signifiers, it transformed identity narratives in an inclusive, non-conflictual manner. The new, 'European' interpretations of identity were upheld by the discourse of Europeanization, so stabilizing them also re-enforced the hegemony of Europeanization and the political relevance of its project of integration. Where Europeanization did not

succeed in articulating credible alternative meanings of national identity signifiers, conflictuality was perpetuated. The discourse of nationalism, which continued to provide the dominant interpretations of national identity signifiers around these points, often succeeded in capturing the signifiers of 'Europe', instrumentalizing them for the purposes of asserting its own hegemony over discursive reality. This significantly threatened the credibility of the Europeanization discourse itself and problematized its political relevance. These conclusions are therefore relevant to understanding not only the place of national identity in Europe, but also the future of the European project. In this sense, the originality of the investigation is threefold.

In the first place, it is contained in the cross-disciplinary approach and analytical frame. Studying national identity change at the inter-section of the discipline of International Relations and the sub-disciplines of European Studies and the Study of Nationalism is in itself novel. The dissertation explores transformations of national identity narratives in the 'Self'- 'Other' dialectic they perpetuate. Following the evolution of conflictuality in bilateral relations between two states (a traditional International Relations object of study) within the context of Europeanization (a classical European Studies field), the analysis reveals mechanisms of reconciling conflictual national identities (a central theme in the Study of Nationalism). The advantage of this approach lies in the combination of various theoretical backgrounds which enables fuller understanding of the role of national identity in Europe. The application of poststructuralist discourse theory, which easily accommodates such cross-disciplinarity, to the analysis of national identity change completes the unique theoretical configuration that represents this study's disciplinary and analytical background.

A second aspect in which the dissertation represents a novel research contribution is contained in its claim about the role of national identity within the European project. Analyzing the struggle for hegemony between the discourses of nationalism and of Europeanization, the analysis points to an inherent tension within the European integration project which it constantly attempts to deny. As long as it operates within the constraints of the political project of nation-state sovereignty, integration in Europe will perpetually be challenged by re-surfacing nationalist interpretations of identity. On one

end of the line (not inconceivably far down) stands the possibility of dislocating the Europeanization discourse and cancelling out its institutional construct. On the other (very far) end stands the possibility of transcending these constraints and re-enforcing a new symbolic order of Europeanization detached from the political project of nation-state sovereignty. This possibility might create the conditions for eventually dislocating the discourse of nationalism. The conclusions of this study stand somewhere in between. The political relevance of national identity in Europe is a fact, not only in its periphery but also in its very heart, even though the antagonisms it perpetuates is the last thing that Europe needs well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Europeanization, therefore, needs to find a way to co-exist in the discursive presence of nationalism, ensured by the relevance of national identity, and still maintain its discursive power. It can do so by offering a credible alternative reading of national identity, upholding a positive, optimistic, self-enhancing vision of national subjectivity. The discourse of Europeanization has the potential to do this. By re-positioning threatening 'otherness' and deferring it from the 'Self', it can significantly reduce conflictuality in identity articulation, at least within the limits of 'Europe'. It can therefore offer a much broader range of possibilities for cooperation than identity articulated within nationalism. It can also claim moral superiority over nationalism in view of its reconciliatory potential and inclusive quality. Read within the discourse of Europeanization in such a manner, national identity narratives perpetuate the discursive hegemony which renders them credible. Inability to accommodate the signifiers of national identity, on the other hand, could pose a hegemonic threat to the discourse of 'Europe' and assert the hegemony of nationalism. In this sense, the reading of national identity becomes the touchstone of the integration project. This suggestion is in itself a novel approach to seeing national identity in Europe.

A third aspect of originality of this dissertation is its area focus. Taking up cases from the Balkans, the analysis contributes to the literature on a much understudied problem: the complex bilateral relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia<sup>213</sup>. Embedded into a common past for much of their newer histories, the two

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<sup>213</sup> The official constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia will be used in this dissertation at the expense of the internationally recognized 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'.

states have evolved from joint emancipatory struggles for independent statehood during the 19<sup>th</sup> century into concealed sovereign antagonists in the heart of the Balkans of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because of the particular historical context within which this evolution occurred and the East-West divide which had dominated both politics and academia in the region, the study of the relationship between the two states has mostly been framed within their domestic histories.<sup>214</sup> Thus it has been unable to avoid the structuring influences of domestic contexts of nationalist interpretations of history. This dissertation explores conflictuality in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations from a non-historical perspective. Its discursive approach reveals the contingent nature of historical narratives and studies them as a means to uncover the power relations which upheld them in the first place. It attempts to understand the logic of discursive strategies of ‘othering’ which generate identity-based conflictuality, and to investigate the mechanisms for reconciliation which the grand discourse of Europeanization can provide. Presuming the impossibility of scientific objectivity, this dissertation therefore attempts to transcend the analytical constraints of discursive hegemony by focusing on the strategies of empowerment of hegemonic discourse and telling ‘small stories’ about the ways national identity changes and affects discursive reality. Understanding the logic of those promises to reveal much more about Bulgarian-Macedonian relations than existing research struggling within dominant interpretations of history. In this sense, the analysis offers an original contribution to an underexplored cleavage of Balkan politics – in the context of Europeanization.

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Having outlined poststructuralist discourse theory as the theoretical and meta-theoretical frame of analysis underpinning this dissertation, and having explored its applicability to the research theme, research object and research goal of the dissertation, this chapter pointed

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<sup>214</sup> See on the Bulgarian side, Dimitar Gotsev, *National Liberation Struggles in Macedonia 1912-1915* (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1981) in Bulgarian, Kostadin Paleshtuski, *The Macedonian Question in Bourgeois Yugoslavia 1918-1941* (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1983) in Bulgarian, Kuzman Shapkarev, *Reviving Bulgarian Spirit in Macedonia, Unpublished Notes and Letters* (Sofia: Bulgarian Author, 1984). On the Macedonian (Yugoslav) side, Aleksandar Hristov, *Creating the Macedonian State (1893-1945)* (Belgrade: Contemporary Administration, 1971) in Serbian, Lazar Kolishevski, *Aspects of the Macedonian Question* (Belgrade: People’s Book, 1981) in Serbian, Momchilo Stefanovich and Mihailo Apostolski, *Greater Bulgarian Claims from San Stefano to the Present* (Belgrade: Vuk Karadžić, 1978) in Serbian.

to the aspects of originality which distinguish the current piece of research. The purpose of the following chapter is to lay out the methodological frame of the investigation and to present the particular methods which enabled its realization.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN, METHOD:

#### DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE STORIES OF IDENTITY

Unsurprisingly, certain ontological considerations are related to certain epistemological choices, which together structure the way research is designed.<sup>215</sup> Meta-theoretical assumptions pre-determine what is there to be studied and how it can be approached. As discussed in detail in the previous chapter, poststructuralist discourse theory forms the theoretical background of this analysis. Its anti-essentialist ontology and anti-foundationalist epistemology inevitably affect the research design of this investigation. The following chapter aims to demonstrate how poststructuralist discourse theory's key analytical tool – discourse analysis – is applied to achieve the research purpose of this study: explore the mechanisms of narrative transformation of national identity within the context of Europeanization in order to better understand the significance of national identity within the European integration project. The findings of the investigation permitted the formulation of the central claim of this study. The credible reading of national identity narratives within the Europeanization discourse asserts the political relevance of the latter and has the potential to re-enforce a new discursive hegemony, marginalizing the discourse of nationalism. Before it proceeds to the specific methodological steps which enabled these findings, this chapter offers a brief justification of the topical research focus of the dissertation and its selection of cases.

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<sup>215</sup> For a useful overview of scholarly debates on this point Colin Hay, 'Does Ontology Trump Epistemology? Notes on the Directional Dependence of Ontology and Epistemology in Political Analysis', *Politics* 27(2), (2007): 115–118.

## ***Methodology***

### *Why Focus on the Eastern Enlargement*

The analysis sought to identify suitable discursive contexts which showcased the dynamics of 'reading' national identity within the discourse of Europeanization against that of nationalism, and to explore their credibility. Dominant interpretations of national identity narratives are examined within this changing discursive environment, conditioned by the hegemonic struggles between the grand discourses of nationalism and of Europeanization. The context of EU enlargement to the former communist space is seen here as showcasing these hegemonic struggles. In a very visible way, the breakup of communism in Europe and the appeal of European integration upheld Europeanization as a grand discourse, at the same time acknowledging the legitimate attraction of nationalism as an organizing discourse for the story of the state. This openness about the legitimacy of nationalism cannot be observed in much the same way outside the former communist space in Europe because of the specific historical background to the idea of integration and the different political course which the rest of Europe took after the Second World War. At the same time the normative attraction of the integration idea in the particular context of the breakup of communism decidedly empowered the discourse of Europeanization to compete with the dominant meanings established by nationalism. In this sense the Enlargement of the European integration project to the former communist space replicates a discursive environment similar to the one characterizing the early years of integration: challenged discursive hegemony of nationalism, enabling the empowerment of an alternative grand discourse. This environment would not have been as visible within traditional EU member states where Europeanization is represented as hegemonic. Though struggling with the discursive challenges posed by nationalism, traditional EU member states do not officially debate Europe without the integration project<sup>216</sup>. Excluding this option, which remains available to non-EU member states, attempts to conceal the discursive struggle between the two grand discourses over hegemonic interpretations of

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<sup>216</sup> At least not as an official position of the state.



identity. The context of EU enlargement, in contrast, is open to it and therefore promises to reveal more about the narrative mechanisms of reading national identity in a credible manner and the discursive power of certain readings over others. Focusing on it has the analytical advantage of tracing the conditions of possibility which enabled the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse, emphasizing the discursive power of its interpretations of social reality – and identities. Unlike nationalism, whose power rests on antagonized national identities, the power of Europeanization discourse lies in its reconciliatory potential. Significantly increasing the credibility of the national narratives as a story of the state, Europeanization incorporated them into a new discursive hegemony. This dynamics, which the current study sets out to investigate, is captured in the process of enlargement of the European Union to the former communist states in Central and South-Eastern Europe. This is what makes it a suitable analytical context for the investigation.

The progress of decommunization generally increased the political relevance of national identity both as a strategy of dissent against totalitarian ideology and as a nation- and state-building strategy. In the changing discursive context of empowering Europeanization in the former communist space, ‘reading’ national identity became an indispensable element of the political struggles for hegemony in view of national identity’s link to sovereign power. Its political relevance, however, was not always as obvious. It is where identity narratives were antagonized to tangible identity-based conflictuality that their significance in formulating official state positions became evident and political mechanisms for reconciliation were called for. The Balkan region signified one such discursive point.

### *Why Turn to the Balkans*

Among the states which emerged out of communism and (re-)turned to Europe, almost all can offer contexts of identity-based conflictuality, whether implicit or explicit. True, issues of national identity re-definition have been as prominent in Central Europe as they have been in the Baltic states. More often than not they have occurred along the fault line of ethno-national antagonisms<sup>217</sup> and have remained low key as a problem of domestic

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<sup>217</sup> Examples include a wide range of (ethno-)nations and (ethno-)nationalities in Europe: the problems of accommodating Russian minorities in the Baltics (reference points on that and other minority issues in Europe in Stephen Deets, ‘Reimagining the Boundaries of the Nation: Politics and the Development of Ideas

politics.<sup>218</sup> But in the Balkans they escalated to inter-ethnic violence, ethnic cleansing and nationalist war. It was from the Balkans that Europe's claims for having tamed conflictual nationalisms were inecquivokably challenged. The uncertainties caused by the complex transitions which the Balkan states<sup>219</sup> embarked upon, significantly complicated by the imperatives of consolidating statehood and nationhood, triggered more intensive discursive strategies of identification. In the immediate absence of plausible alternative interpretations of collective state identity, they turned to nationhood as a relatively stable vision of 'Self'. The salience of nationalism in the Balkans became so pervasive that explanations of it have often been linked to 'cultural' peculiarities of the region itself.<sup>220</sup> Choosing to study the dynamics of Europeanization's reading of national identity in the Balkans, out of many possible cases from the former communist space, therefore aims to reflect the increased salience of identity-based conflictuality in the region. Within the conceptual frame of this dissertation, it is seen as offering 'most difficult'<sup>221</sup> cases of identity accommodation in 'Europe'. In view of the discursive tension between the discourse of Europeanization and the discourse of nationalism, 'difficult' cases of accommodation would be national identity narratives articulated hegemonically within the discourse of nationalism. Indeed, the opposite could have made Europeanization the most likely outcome of this discursive configuration.<sup>222</sup> It would therefore not have been able to reveal as much about the logic of accommodation as a 'difficult' case can.

### *Why Select Bulgaria and Macedonia*

The investigation selected Bulgaria and Macedonia as its case studies. The two states showcase the discursive struggle discussed above. The break-up of communism submerged both of them in complex processes of transition to democracy and market

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on Minority Rights', *East European Politics and Societies* 20 (3): 419-466); Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia (Aurelian Craiutu, 'A Dilemma of Dual Identity: the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania', *European Constitutional Review* 43 (1995)), Roma issues, etc.

<sup>218</sup> Despite various degrees of escalation of tensions – Estonia, Latvia.

<sup>219</sup> With the exception of Greece and Turkey.

<sup>220</sup> Maria Todorova challenges some of the arguments in this vein, see for instance Maria Todorova, 'The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism', *Slavic Review* 64(1), (2005): 140-164, and Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>221</sup> Jason Seawright and John Gerring, 'Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options', *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2), (2008): 294-308.

<sup>222</sup> As the unproblematic 1995 EU-accession of Finland, Austria and Sweden suggests.

economy, as well as to consolidating nationhood and statehood. These major internal reforms created a context of insecurity which re-activated national identity rhetoric as a strategy of organizing and stabilizing the discursive space. National identity's most salient interpretations came from the discourse of nationalism, as the analysis in the empirical chapters will demonstrate. Decommunization processes thus re-enforced the political relevance of nationalism and politicized the inherent conflictuality which it contained. Empirically, this was linked to increased intra-state and inter-state antagonism. Despite their popular appeal, however, nationalist interpretations of identity had also been somewhat compromised, either because they had been utilized by the repressive regime (as in Bulgaria) or because they had been associated with violence and war (as in Macedonia). The project of integration in Europe offered an alternative interpretation of national role and purpose. The idea of (re-)turn to Europe as an optimistic vision for the future formulated participation in the project of European integration as a logical strategic goal from the very beginning of transition in both Bulgaria and Macedonia.<sup>223</sup> This gradually empowered the discourse of Europeanization and linked it to the processes of national identity (re-)construction. Therefore, the discursive contexts within the two states illustrate the dynamics of national identity re-narration from the discursive hegemony of nationalism to the empowerment of Europeanization.

Their selection as offering cases of narrative transformation of national identity, out of many possible cases from states in the Balkans, has been motivated by two considerations. One is purely pragmatic. This author has extensive previous knowledge of the two states, an insider's view, access to institutional sources, linguistic competences. This not only greatly facilitates research. It also becomes a necessary precondition if the research is framed within a discursive approach which focuses on identifying specific contexts and linking them to particular meanings articulated through language.

A second consideration which prompted this research choice is linked to its analytical relevance. As pointed above, the analysis seeks 'difficult' cases of national identity accommodation within the discourse of Europeanization, which is why it looked for them

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<sup>223</sup> Usually linked to aspirations to join the Western military alliance, the NATO, and articulated in the formula 'Euro-Atlantic integration'.

in the Balkans. Bulgaria and Macedonia offer such cases in view of the increased salience of nationalist interpretations of identity in their transitions. In comparison to other Balkan states, however, Bulgaria and Macedonia offer cases of identity narratives whose conflictuality can be considered moderate. They never participated in the type of ethno-nationalist violence which occurred in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo. Even though manifested on every key political occasion, their conflictuality remained implicit. It is read in antagonistic interpretations of the signifiers of 'Self' upheld within the state and projected externally. It is displayed in conflictual state behaviour towards the domestic and foreign national 'Other(s)'. While identity-based antagonisms exploding in violence are characteristic of the extreme cases of nationalism, the conflictuality in Bulgarian and Macedonian national identity narratives characterizes its most common cases. Indeed, this type of conflictuality can be detected not only in the former communist space but in the majority of states in Europe. As already noted, nationalism delimits the boundaries between national 'Self' and 'Other' along the borders of the national state as, customarily, borders identify separate national communities. Even when such communities co-exist within national borders, they still refer to past, prospective, or imaginary borders in their affirmation of collective identity.<sup>224</sup> The divisive function of borders is necessary for national identity construction because its absence would subvert the uniqueness of the national 'Self'. Thus, commonality conditions increased conflictuality, and states in Europe have a lot in common. In this sense the moderate conflictuality of Bulgaria's and Macedonia's national identity narratives illustrates 'most similar'<sup>225</sup> cases of European nationalism. Understanding its mechanisms of reconciliation within the discourse of Europeanization, therefore, has much greater applicability than studying an extreme case. Situated at the ideal methodological inter-section of similarity and difference in view of the salience of nationalism as a dominant discursive space for the narration of national identity, Bulgaria and Macedonia became the topical focus of this investigation.

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<sup>224</sup> E.g. Flemish nationalism in Belgium, Basque nationalism in France, Catalan nationalism in Spain.

<sup>225</sup> Seawright and Gerring, 'Case Selection Techniques', 304-306.

*The Advantages of Comparative Analysis*

A study of national identity narratives, however, would not be complete if it focused only on the articulations of national 'Self'. National identity is necessarily constituted and re-asserted against its constitutive 'Other(s)'. It has no other determining centre, as discussed in greater length above. In this sense, its discursive articulations are inextricable from the discursive articulations of 'otherness'. Obviously, the infinite number of excluded options upon which the constitution of national identity is made possible disables studying the 'Self'- 'Other' dialectic in all of its interpretations as a viable research option. This is what suggested selecting one of its central dimensions and exploring its transformations. Certainly, this cannot be isolated from the entirety of the discursive field in which identity is being positioned. Conflictuality along one dimension of the 'Self'- 'Other' dialectic is necessarily affected by its other dimensions. A valid analysis should acknowledge this. But isolating just one dimension enables the construction of a feasible research design that is capable of revealing the peculiarities of identity transformation under two hegemonic interpretations against a background of infinite possibility.

As noted in the discussion on the field of discursivity, not all excluded alternative interpretations of identity are equally relevant to identity construction. Several more salient interpretations compete for the contents of the same identity signifiers, upholding different narratives. Their salience is determined by the outcome of political struggles which eventually brought about the stabilization of one interpretation of identity over another. In Bulgarian and Macedonian identity politics, Bulgarian-Macedonian relations delineate one particularly salient dimension of 'othering' in the construction of national identity because of the key position which the particular 'Other' took in articulating the 'Self'. This is the methodological reasoning behind selecting conflictuality in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, out of all possible alternatives, as central dimension of identity construction in the two states.

Tracing the transformations of national identity narratives in the process of empowering the Europeanization discourse in two states and the evolution of their conflictual relations has been prompted by the conceptual framework of this study. But it also offers the

methodological advantages of comparative research. Either one of the case studies of conflictual national identity narratives on its own would have probably provided a more detailed picture of the peculiarities of identity articulation domestically. Nevertheless, this would have been an incomplete picture because it would have lacked the dynamics of interaction along the 'Self-Other' axis. Having two case studies instead of one allows highlighting the function of 'otherness' in the identity construction, be it only along one dimension of the 'Self'-Other' dialectic. It also prompts the inclusion of bilateral relations as an analytical field, thus offering insights not only to the domestic, but also to the external articulations of identity. Furthermore, having two case studies and not just one offers the possibility of tracing the transformations of identity narratives synchronically in the process of empowering the Europeanization discourse. Focusing on the same elements of identity articulation domestically and externally and identifying their modified interpretations promises to provide a fuller understanding of the mechanism of accommodating conflictual national identity narratives within the discourse of Europeanization. Comparing the outcomes uncovers commonalities and differences of accommodation which transcend the peculiarities of the single case study and offer a basis of inference. Turning one case study into a *sui generis* testing ground for the conclusions reached through the other becomes an indicator of the specific and the general outcomes in the two. In this sense the applicability of comparative analysis has been invaluable.

### *Case Studies and Their Comparability*

As argued above, similarity of discursive contexts in Bulgaria and Macedonia suggests a basis of comparability between identity narratives and their transformation with the empowerment of Europeanization. This similarity has been conditioned by common elements in the fundament of identity (re-)narration. Bulgaria and Macedonia share into the geopolitical specificity of the Balkan region, so their interpretations of territory and territorial space have referred to similar reference points. The two states also share into the leading narratives of Balkan history centred around struggles for emancipation from the Ottoman Empire, movements for national independence and ambitions for integral national sovereignty. Within the discourse of nationalism these historical narratives are similarly salient, even though interpreted in a mutually exclusive manner. A third aspect of

similarity is determined by national culture. Its most sedimented aspects have been articulated in the traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy and similar dialects from the Slavic linguistic family. Cultural similarities were seen as particularly threatening to the uniqueness of national 'Self' precisely because of their sedimented quality. Furthermore, the two states display notable similarities in their post-communist transitions. With the breakup of communism in Europe they both embarked upon complex processes of establishing democracy, re-structuring the market, re-defining the principles of statehood and consolidating nationhood. These reforms initially generated greater insecurity, which similarly re-activated the political salience of national identity as a strategy of making sense of destabilized discursive realities. Yet another aspect of similarity is revealed in the post-communist strategic orientation of the two states. As a strategic foreign policy goal both Bulgaria and Macedonia subscribed to the aspiration for Euro-Atlantic integration. This strategic orientation created the condition of possibility in both states for the empowerment of the discourse of Europeanization. Thus, commonality between Bulgaria and Macedonia includes similar elements in the traditional narration of national identity (territory, history, culture, direction) occupying similar discursive positions. It also displays similar discursive dynamics: the interaction between politically salient nationalism and empowering Europeanization. This points to the basis of comparability between the two and promises valid conclusions about the mechanisms of identity transformation within the discourse of Europeanization.

But at the same time, the two states display specificities which need to be accounted for. They come from different traditions of statehood (unitary state versus a federative entity) which affects the way sovereignty and sovereign territory are being interpreted. It also has consequences for the perceptions of integrity of the state community. Differences in the domestic accommodation of national minorities (a monolithic-nation constitutional model versus a multi-nationality constitutional model) affect the narratives of nationhood and the interpretations of the nation in the two states. Differences in the interpretation of identity signifiers in the two states' narratives of identity promise to add empirical value to the investigation. Irrespective of the precise contents of the signifiers of identity, they function in a similar way in the discursive practices of articulation and over-determination

of subject positions. Specificities in the two states also promise to add analytical value to the study. Unequal positions in the international system of states (recognized statehood versus the outstanding issue of acquiring international recognition) and dissimilar positions in regional politics (open disputes with other neighbours in the Macedonian case) lead to divergent paths towards European integration and consequently different strategies of empowering the Europeanization discourse. Nevertheless, European integration continued to represent a strategic point of national direction in the period under study and the European community continued to provide sufficient incentives in order to maintain the credibility of the strategic goal. In this sense, Europeanization remained dominant as an alternative discourse of community. Therefore, the different strategies of empowering it suggest different mechanisms of capturing identity signifiers within the discourse of 'Europe'. The purpose of this dissertation is understanding these mechanisms. So comparison between the two states promises to establish a plausible basis for inference.<sup>226</sup>

### *Level of Analysis*

National identity narratives and their transformation can be studied both at the micro- and the macro-level since the community they imagine links the individual to the sovereign power which governs individual lives. Both methodological starting points, as well as a combination of the two, are valid research options promising interesting insights. The analysis offered in this dissertation operates at the level of the state. This methodological choice has been prompted by the disciplinary background of the study, by its subject and research goals, as well as by its conceptual framework. Originating from the empirical puzzle of nationalist conflict and conflictuality in Europe, this dissertation sets out to explore the mechanisms for antagonization and reconciliation of national identity within the discursive limits of Europeanization. International relations theory, which theorizes nationalist conflict at the level of the state, forms the natural background of the analysis. It intersects with the sub-disciplines of European Studies and the Study of Nationalism precisely in their common interest in national identity as nation-state identity. Analyzing

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<sup>226</sup> Given its anti-essentialist ontology and reflectivist epistemology, the inference aimed at is descriptive and at best predictive, rather than causal.



the transformations of national identity at the state level is also justified by the research goals of this study. It follows transformations in national identity narratives in order to establish changes in the narration of the national story legitimizing the state and state sovereignty in the European integration project. The investigation traces the evolution of conflictuality in order to establish how changed stories of community stabilize one discursive power formation or another. Since the fault lines of discursive tension concern the legitimacy of the state and supra-state communities, then studying national identity narratives at the micro level is beyond the analytical interest of this dissertation. The conceptualization of national identity from a discourse theory perspective also suggests the irrelevance of the micro-level here. National identity differs from other social identities precisely in its link to sovereign power – this is what determines its political relevance. Focusing on the micro-level would marginalize this link at the expense of the psychological and sociological dimensions of identity articulation. And since this dissertation is interested in national identity narratives in their relevance to legitimizing different discursive hegemonies, it formulates its conclusions to be valid for the level of the state.

### *Unit of Analysis*

The unit of analysis indicates what exactly is being studied.<sup>227</sup> As pointed out above, the subject of this investigation is the transformation of national identity narratives and the mechanisms of their accommodation in the grand discourse of Europeanization. Therefore, *what is being studied is national identity narratives*. This is the unit of analysis. National identity narratives are made up of stories articulating the subject positions of national 'Self' and 'Other'. Therefore, they represent a discursive dialectic which determines the interaction of the national 'Self' with 'Other(s)' and is in turn re-produced in these interactions. Studying national identity in the context of inter-state (read inter-national) relations therefore promises to reveal more about the interpretations of 'Self' and 'Other' than analyzing identity narratives in isolation from actual state behaviour. This is what suggested the applicability of a small-N comparative study: here, studying several (six)

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<sup>227</sup> According to students of methodology, this step precisely is what distinguishes a case study (single unit) from a cross-case analysis (many units): John Gerring, 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?', *The American Political Science Review* 98 (2), (2004): 341-354, 343.

identity narratives over two states.<sup>228</sup> Following the transformations of interpretations of 'Self' and 'Other' in the bilateral relations of these two states highlights changes along one (central) dimension of the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic, which is necessarily a simplified model of identity change. At the expense of empirical detail, however, this methodological approach promises to uncover the logic of discursive transformation of national identity, which is the aim of this investigation.

National identity has been defined here as a collection of narratives. So the selected dimension of the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic is identifiable through narratives telling the story of the 'Self' in relation to that particular 'Other'. These narratives indicate the discursive subject positions of 'us' and 'them'. Thus they are directed both towards the domestic national space (inhabited predominantly by the 'Self(ves)') and towards the external national space (inhabited by the 'Other(s)'). They focus on key elements characterizing the subject positions and narrating their story. The discursive position of national 'Self' is traditionally fixed through particular interpretations of history, territory, borders, nationhood, minorities, national role, political culture, language, religion, customs, traditions. This analysis chooses three of these signifiers which have greater salience and are present in the discursive constructions of identity in both Bulgaria and Macedonia. They are territory, nationhood, and national purpose. Their interpretations uphold three key narrative groups indicating the discursive position of 'Self'. The discursive position of 'Other' is fixed through elements establishing the limits of 'Self'. In inter-state relations they are often contentious issues which highlight difference. Several elements in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations can be seen to serve this purpose: divergent interpretations of shared past, nationhood, statehood, church autocephality, language, minorities. Three have been selected as more salient in structuring bilateral relations: recognition of statehood, the language dispute, and acknowledging the status of national minorities. The interpretations of these three elements uphold narratives of identity which indicate the discursive position of 'Other' in the national identity construction.

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<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

Thus the analysis studies six national identity narratives (units): three of them are predominantly concerned with positioning the 'Self' and three of them – with positioning the 'Other' (Table 1). Tracing modifications in these six units in the course of empowering Europeanization in the two states should uncover the mechanisms of 'reading' identity signifiers within the new discursive formation and should indicate the logic of identity change. Focusing on one dimension of the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic which (re-)produces identity – Bulgarian-Macedonian relations – helps highlight the investigated discursive dynamics.

Identity Narratives of 'Self'	Identity Narratives of 'Other'
Territory	Recognition of statehood
Nationhood	The language dispute
National purpose	National Minority Rights

Table 1. Units of Analysis.

### *Analytical Timeframe*

A logical approach to setting the timeframe within which identity change will be analysed here is to look at national identity narratives before the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse and after. Defining 'before' and 'after', however, implies selecting more or less discretionary moments in time, since the exact time of establishing a hegemonic discourse cannot be set in stone. Instead of looking for clues for formalizing the discursive empowerment of Europeanization, this analysis sets a timeframe using formal criteria and traces the transformation of the selected identity narratives within this timeframe. Europeanization began in the context of post-communist transition, so its chronological limits should contain (part of) the process of empowering the 'Europe' discourse.

Transition was launched with the dismantling of the communist regimes. Formally this is linked to the first multi-party elections of 1990 for both Bulgaria and Macedonia, even though the symbolic marker of the end of communism is customarily placed elsewhere in the two states. In Bulgaria it is seen in the date 10<sup>th</sup> November 1989, when Bulgaria's

totalitarian head of state was ousted from power in a party coup.<sup>229</sup> In Macedonia, special symbolic meaning is carried by the declaration of independence of 8<sup>th</sup> September 1991, marking the break up from the Yugoslav federation and the beginning of Macedonia's independent statehood. Despite the significant symbolism of these dates, a formal criterion has been preferred for selecting the beginning of the analysed period. First, formality enables chronological parity. Second, and more importantly, it prevents the analysis from missing out on key moments in the articulation of Macedonia's national identity narratives (which already revolved around independence) should the later date be preferred. Also, dismantling the communist regime in Bulgaria was largely negotiated by the leadership of the communist party<sup>230</sup>, so the opposition needed time to organize and mobilize before decommunization could begin. In this sense, not much is lost in terms of official public debate on national identity if the last quarter of 1989 is not included in the analyzed timeframe.

The chronological point marking its end is set by Bulgaria's joining the EU as a symbolic mark of the end of transition – the first day of 2007. Obviously, the Europeanization discourse continues to undergo significant (and quite interesting) changes in both of the studied states after one of them achieved membership. But since the other state has not, this implies a completely different basis of comparability from the one adopted here. Participating in the discourse of Europeanization as a candidate and as a member state produces very dissimilar strategies of identity articulation in view of different subject positions of the state towards the supranational community. In this sense a comparison of identity narratives requires a different conceptual and methodological basis. It should make for the subject of exciting new research on national identity and Europeanization in the relations between the two states.<sup>231</sup>

Within this timeframe, identity narratives articulating the discursive position of 'Self' are studied towards the beginning and towards the end of transition. These narratives are

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<sup>229</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *We The People* (Penguin, 1999).

<sup>230</sup> Jon Elster (ed.), *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), ch. 5.

<sup>231</sup> That should also reveal the stability of accommodation of the national narratives and test the reconciliatory power of the new discursive hegemony.

more static because of their function – to stabilize the position of ‘Self’, and are generally not linked to specific points in time. Unless their salience notably increases in view of particular discursive occurrences (e.g. the inter-ethnic tension in Macedonia of 2001), it is safe to assume that the dynamic of change there requires more time to unfold. Identity narratives articulating the discursive position of ‘Other’ are much more vulnerable to changing political contexts because they are more dependent on inter-state relations. Therefore, their investigation here concentrates around the moments of increased salience marked by significant events of bilateral concern. Narratives of recognition of statehood are thus most salient around the time of Bulgaria’s recognition of Macedonian independence (1991). Narratives of language are linked to the period of the so called language dispute and its resolution (1994-1999). Narratives of minorities are visible at various points during the studied period but their salience increases significantly with the involvement of the European Court of Human Rights after 1999. Therefore, the discursive space which is the object of this investigation is chronologically oriented towards these points (Table 2).

<b>Narratives of Identity</b>	1990-	1991-1993	1994-1999	2000-2006	-2006
Self	Territory				Territory
	Nationhood				Nationhood
	Purpose				Purpose
Other		Recognition	Language	Minorities	

Table 2. Analytical timeframe and salience of identity narratives.

### ***Research Design***

Understanding the mechanisms of accommodating narratives of national identity within the discourse of Europeanization involves studying identity change. The investigation traces the transformations in national identity interpretations in the course of empowering ‘Europe’ in Bulgaria and in Macedonia. Conceptualizing national identity as a discursive construction made possible through the exclusion of ‘otherness’, the analysis selects one central dimension of the ‘Self’-‘Other’ dialectic that accounts for identity constitution – Bulgarian-Macedonian relations – and follows its evolution under the hegemony of the

Europeanization discourse. It attempts to identify transformations both in the discursive position of 'Self' and in the discursive position of 'Other'. It therefore follows identity narratives articulated towards the domestic and towards the external discursive space. Empirically, this implies studying co-variations diachronically within the units and synchronically across the units.<sup>232</sup>

Domestic articulations of identity narratives are being traced around three traditional identity signifiers, which have been identified in both cases. They are upheld through the interpretations of national territory, national community, national purpose. The contents of these identity signifiers notably changes over time in the course of Europeanization. Some of its interpretations increase or decrease in salience, others disappear completely, yet other new interpretations gain discursive prominence. The transformation is being established in a within-unit comparison of the discursive pattern of national identity at the beginning of the process of transition, when national identity is being articulated within the discourse of nationalism, and towards its end, when national identity signifiers are increasingly being captured by the discourse of Europeanization (Table 3).

Identity Signifier of Self	1990		2006	
	Bulgaria	Macedonia	Bulgaria	Macedonia
<b>Territory</b>	integrity	belonging	openness	integrity
<b>Nationhood</b>	unity	ambiguity	tolerance	tolerance
<b>Purpose</b>	centrality	statehood	contribution	predictability

Table 3. Research Design for the study of identity narratives of 'Self'.

As visible from the table, different interpretations occupy similar discursive positions at the beginning of transition and towards its end. They make up for different discursive patterns of national identity. The analysis establishes that narratives of 'Self' generally tend to display a greater divisive potential within the discourse of nationalism and be more inclusive within the discourse of Europeanization, irrespective of the precise contents of their signifiers.

<sup>232</sup> Gerring, 'What Is a Case Study?', 343.

External articulations of identity narratives are being traced around three signifiers whose interpretations in both states raise significant conflictuality. They are detectable around the issue of recognition of statehood, in the language dispute and on the status of minorities. The transformations of these narratives are followed in an across-unit comparison of the evolution of interpretations in the course of empowering Europeanization (Table 4).

Table 4 suggests that there has been visible shift in the interpretations of conflictual issues towards reconciliation. A detailed analysis of the narrative transformations demonstrates that what enabled transcending antagonisms was expanding the field of commonality between the two states through mutual participation in the discourse of Europeanization and the new responsibilities it determined.

Identity Signifier of Other	Bulgaria		Macedonia	
	1991	1993	1991	1993
Recognition	Macedonia is part of Bulgaria	First state to officially recognize the independent republic	Bulgaria as a threat to Macedonian statehood	Bulgaria as a partner
Language	1994	1999	1994	1999
	Macedonian is Bulgarian	Macedonia has a right to its own constitutionally defined language	Bulgarian and Macedonian have nothing in common	Despite commonality, Bulgarian and Macedonian are now different languages
Minorities	1999	2006	1999	2006
	Macedonian nation and national minorities are non-existent	Macedonians in Bulgaria have their rights guaranteed on par with the rest of the individual citizens	Bulgaria's only role in Macedonian nationhood has been as an occupant force	Occasional recognition of a Bulgarian element in the construction of the state

Table 4. Research Design for the Study of Identity Narratives of 'Other'.

Comparing the findings from the investigation of the transformations and modifications in the narratives of national identity articulated by the two states domestically and externally

suggests two principal conclusions. First, participation in the discourse of Europeanization visibly reduces conflictuality in national identity narratives interpretations. It makes national identity constructions more open, more inclusive, and more focused on the possibilities of the present and future. Second, participation in the processes of integration upholds a reading of national identity which ensures the hegemony of the Europeanization discourse and the marginalization of the discourse of nationalism. The empirical analysis uncovers the discursive mechanisms of modifying the antagonistic interpretations of national identity signifiers and replacing them with meanings upheld by the discourse of community in 'Europe'. The methodological toolbox of poststructuralist discourse theory and its principal methodological tool – discourse analysis – enable the practical implementation of this analytical task.

### ***Discourse Analysis as a Method***

Because of the vast amount of academic work on identity and discourse accumulated in the last couple of decades, the analytical link between the two has acquired a somewhat taken-for-granted quality. Therefore, it would be useful to re-iterate exactly what makes discourse analysis relevant to the study of identity, and a preferred choice of method<sup>233</sup> for this piece of research examining its transformations.

Originating in branches of philosophy, literary theory and linguistics, discourse analysis has developed to be applicable to a wide range of disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, communication, and, remarkably, the study of politics and international relations. Informed by the insights of discourse theory, the method has helped to problematize, in practice, the objectivistic, rationalistic bias of mainstream social science theory by challenging existing knowledge paradigms. Its most relevant contribution to the study of politics and international relations has been demonstrating the discursive construction of sedimented norms, values, symbols, and understanding the dynamics of identity formation.<sup>234</sup> But because of its inseparable links to the basic assumptions of

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<sup>233</sup> Here, *stricto sensu* as a method.

<sup>234</sup> Howarth and Torfing, *Discourse Theory*, 1-32.



discourse theory, discourse analysis is perhaps more accurately referred to as a 'methodology,' rather than as a 'method'. This means that it inevitably combines theoretical and meta-theoretical elements ('ways of thinking about discourse'<sup>235</sup>) with strictly methodological elements ('treating discourse as data'). In this sense, as Wood and Kroger observe, it is not simply 'an alternative to conventional methodologies; it is an alternative to the perspectives in which those methodologies are embedded.'<sup>236</sup> Bearing that in mind, henceforward the term will be used in the strictly methodological sense, and allowance for its meta-theoretical elements will be made by references to 'discourse theory'.

The great advantage of discourse analysis as a method is that it 'allows [for] the integration of different dimensions of interdisciplinarity'<sup>237</sup>. This perfectly suits the model of this investigation which works in the intersection of the discipline of International Relations and the sub-disciplines of European and Nationalism Studies. Indeed, neither of these (sub-)disciplines alone can fully account for the complex mechanisms of how identity comes into being and how it changes. Putting their theoretical frames together, however, they have the potential to do so and discourse analysis offers them the methodological instrument to this end. Discourse analysis is particularly suited for an analysis of the discursive construction and articulation of identity precisely because its purpose is to uncover the mechanisms for the construction and articulation of all social meaning. By doing this, it also demonstrates what alternative identities are possible, how those can be taken up and what the implications of such a change can be. Thus it promises to fulfil the principal task of this study: to highlight the mechanisms which enable the accommodation of national identity in the project of European integration.

Another great advantage of discourse analysis is its methodological heterogeneity.<sup>238</sup> Since it has been informed by different disciplines, it can also draw from their methodological toolboxes. Thus the application of discourse analysis permits extensive research design

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<sup>235</sup> Linda Wood and Rolf Kroger, *Doing Discourse Analysis* (London: Sage, 2000), 3.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>237</sup> Ruth Wodak and Michal Krzyzanowski (eds.), *Qualitative Discourse Analysis for the Social Sciences* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 2.

<sup>238</sup> Teun Van Dijk (ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction* (London: Sage, 2004).

combinations. This investigation is structured within a small-N comparative study with a qualitative methodology carried out on the basis of discourse analysis.

Yet another methodological advantage is that discourse analysis facilitates approaching the 'object investigated from multiple perspectives'<sup>239</sup>. In the case of national identity investigation this is particularly helpful because the discursive construction of national identity involves repetitive articulation at different levels: government (foreign policy, defence and security policy, minority policies, education policies, etc.), parliament (adopting relevant legislation – and rejecting it), state research institutes (historical evidence and publications), national media (opinion making on day-to-day issues), etc. Discourse analysis as a method allows for the incorporation of these levels into the investigation, thus gaining advantage over alternative methods such as foreign policy analysis, content analysis, as well as a variety of other qualitative (observation, interviewing, etc.) and quantitative (statistics, large-N cross-casing, etc.) methods.

#### *Defining 'Discourse' in Discourse Analysis*

The discourse analysis method is based on the assumption that all social meaning is constructed through discourses which are made legible in particular uses of language. Therefore studying the contexts in which language operates, the purposes for which language is being used, and the functions language is meant to perform, is the key to understanding all social phenomena. In practice, this is made possible by studying text, or, to be more precise, 'text in context', as per Van Dijk's straightforward definition.<sup>240</sup> It is through studying 'texts in context' that the meanings upheld by the discursive systems of signification are made methodologically legible.

In terms of this definition an important clarification needs to be made. The vast range of possibilities for application of discourse analysis to various research contexts and theoretical approaches<sup>241</sup> has led to the development of many varieties of discourse analysis<sup>242</sup> and, consequently, many definitions of the precise meaning of the term

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<sup>239</sup> Wodak and Krzyzanowski, *Qualitative Discourse Analysis*, 2.

<sup>240</sup> Which is the definition of the term 'discourse' suggested by Teun Van Dijk, *Discourse*, 164.

<sup>241</sup> Point made by Wodak and Krzyzanowski, *Qualitative Discourse Analysis*, 6.

<sup>242</sup> Wood and Kroger, *Doing Discourse Analysis*, Appendix B.

‘discourse’. It is outside the scope of this study to discuss those in detail, but it should be mentioned in passing that differences concern the level of abstraction of the term (a signifying system of signs or the particular use of those signs), its relationship with the idea of text (interchangeable or hierarchical), as well as its relationship with non-written forms of language and non-verbal semantic structures (visual images, body movements, etc.).<sup>243</sup> Thus, we could use Van Dijk’s definition but we need to modify it for the purposes of this analysis.

First, what is being studied is a phenomenon at the level of the state, so the texts used to delineate it discursively are officially produced and meant for the widest possible national audiences. These are by necessity reproduced in the written form (transcriptions) even when they have originally been produced in the spoken form (e.g. official speeches) because it is in their written form that they have reached their widest audience (through reproduction). Those will be analysed as written language. By way of exception, (transcriptions of) a couple of televised presidential addresses will be looked at, which were produced on nation-wide occasions such as national celebrations, and which presumably reached their widest audiences in their spoken form. So, both spoken and written language is meant by ‘text’ but only text in its written form will be analysed discursively here.

Second, a clarification is needed as to what is meant by ‘context’. We are interested in the particular uses that language is being put to: what texts do. This includes strategies of representation, categorization, exclusion; their role in consolidating or dislocating power; their performance in terms of delimiting the legitimate, i.e. what can and cannot be said. Thus ‘context’ is closer in meaning to the working definition suggested by Wood and Kroger which refers to ‘the use of language [...] as social practice’.<sup>244</sup>

### *Techniques of Textual Data Collection and Selection*

On the basis of these definitional notes, which aimed to clarify the meaning of the term ‘discourse’ and its usage, the more practical steps in performing discourse analysis can be

<sup>243</sup> For a good overview, see Wood and Kroger, *Discourse Analysis*, Appendix B and Chapter 2.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

addressed. Discourse analysis is performed by analysing texts contextually in order to establish what they 'do'. The process of deciding which texts to study is known in the literature as 'corpus building'.<sup>245</sup> There are different methods of corpus building. Wodak and Krzyzanowski offer examples of cyclical corpus building (analyzing preliminary corpus, then adding to it and analyzing again until the data no longer yields new representations) or corpus building by progressive specification and reduction (specifying the loci for texts, then selecting data according to the preliminary hypotheses until reaching an operatively small sample).<sup>246</sup> The particular choice of method for the building of a corpus of viable data depends on the research question, goal, and hypothesis. As Mautner points out in her review of print media analysis quoting Bauer and Aarts,<sup>247</sup> attempts at random sampling are generally not appropriate because of the unknown size of the population. At the same time, though, researchers should resist the temptation of 'cherry-picking'<sup>248</sup> texts that support their hypotheses and ignore the ones that do not. Of course, choosing data always involves an element of subjective judgement, which is inevitable. Subjectivity can be somewhat counterbalanced by rigorous justification of choices and additional checks and balances, but it should be nevertheless acknowledged in analyzing the findings. The current analysis uses a kind of 'made-to-order' selection method that has been designed to best suit its purpose. The following paragraphs summarize the techniques used to build a viable corpus of data relevant to the study of narratives of national identity and their transformations under Europeanization discourse.

In a study of identity narratives in two states over a period of time, the first selection criterion that stands out is temporal. This means that only texts produced in the period between 1990 and 2006 are collected. A further criterion comes from specifying the level at which the analysis operates: it is explicitly interested in identity narratives upheld at the level of the state. This means that the selected texts are produced by subjects officially acting on behalf of the state or in their capacity as representing the state. This specification is important because the investigation sets out to establish what can

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<sup>245</sup> Wodak and Krzyzanowski, *Qualitative Discourse Analysis*, 35.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-37.

<sup>247</sup> In Wodak and Krzyzanowski, *Qualitative Discourse Analysis*, 35.

<sup>248</sup> Mautner's metaphor, *ibid.*, 37.

legitimately be said about national identity at the level of the state and how this changes over time.<sup>249</sup> The analysis looks into texts produced by official state representatives such as the president, the prime minister, the speaker and members of parliament, relevant ministers, heads of national research institutes, but also speakers from the leading national media, concerned local authorities, as well as national party leaders. A third criterion comes from specifying the form of the produced texts. They should be officially produced texts meant to reach a widest possible national audience. Only in this form they could represent identity-constituting and identity-articulating acts at the level of the state.

Combining the temporal, the level-of-analysis, and the form criteria is more or less straightforward, but it produces a vast population of potential texts. It covers, among others, official statements of heads of states and prime ministers at key domestic occasions and crucial points in the bilateral relations and foreign policy developments, statements of the speakers of parliament, press-conferences; press releases of the resource ministers and ambassadors on matters of disagreement, bulletins of the foreign ministries; speeches and statements during exchanged formal and informal visits between the two states; official interviews in the leading media: the major party mouthpieces, the national radio and television, etc. Indeed, this population must be reduced to make a viable research corpus. A fourth criterion, topical, is meant to serve this purpose. Identity narratives are being followed around the six discursive elements discussed above. At this stage the data collection and selection process is divided between two topical areas. A little less straightforward, the application of the fourth criterion to the data collected on the basis of the first three, involves elements of subjective judgment and computerized precision.

The first topical area aims to identify texts containing interpretations predominantly concerned with the contents of the signifiers of 'Self'. These are texts containing articulations of the meaning of territory, nationhood, purpose in view of the selected 'Self'-'Other' dimension. The purpose of the study is to explore change in these meanings with the empowerment of Europeanization, so a picture of the discursive pattern of

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<sup>249</sup> As Wæver points out, 'discourses organize knowledge systemically, and thus delimit what can be said and what not' in Hansen and Wæver, *European Integration and National Identity*, 29.

identity 'before' and 'after' Europeanization is needed. These temporal marks, as already emphasized, are arbitrary and can be oriented towards the beginning of transition and towards its end, respectively. The first picture should be compiled from texts produced in the early/mid-1990s, and the second from texts produced in the early/mid-2000s.

Interpretations of the meanings in the three narrative groups can be detected by searching contextual occurrences of particular words. Technically, such sampling can be performed with the help of a software programme such as WordSmith Tools in its Concord component. It is based on electronic searches of word occurrences in context from databases of 'text only' documents. Words identifying the narrative under study are semantically related to the use of the word designating its key signifier. Their contextual use is linked to the denominator 'national'. Sampling of texts related to the signifier of 'territory', for example, can be performed by searching for occurrences of the words 'national' and 'territory' in the texts collected on the basis of the first three criteria (Table 5). A relevant sample is produced when the key words are substituted with semantically related words such as 'borders', 'sovereignty', 'integrity', 'geopolitical', etc. The check-word 'Macedonia' and its derivatives can be entered in order to reduce the sample to texts directly concerned with the interpretations of the signifier of territory in relation to the constitutive 'Other'. Furthermore, additional relevant samples can be produced by the introduction of another check-word such as 'threat', 'autonomy', 'protection', etc.

Selection Criteria	Territory	Nationhood	Purpose
Early/mid-1990s	national+	national+	national+
Official texts	territory borders sovereignty integrity geopolitical threat	nation community citizens, people minority ethnic, identity Bulgarians	purpose interest role responsibility duty future
Public texts	+Macedonia	+Macedonia	+Macedonia

Table 5. Selection Criteria for Identity Narratives of Self in Bulgaria.

The sampling is repeated on Macedonian texts on narratives of identity in the same format. The search for occurrences of key words semantically related to the three signifiers should, however, be modified to take into account some of the peculiarities of the second

state's context. Obviously, linguistic competence and previous knowledge of the political history of the state is indispensable in adapting the sampling technique to the two cases. For example, many relevant interpretations of the signifier of territory have been produced in the context of debating the Macedonian project of independence. To be able to identify these texts, a semantic indicator for 'independence' in relation to 'federation' should be introduced. Another example of modifying the sampling technique is related to the joint introduction of the search words 'nation' and 'nationality' in the Macedonian context in order to produce a textual sample on Macedonian majority-minority relations. In the Bulgarian case, compiling a sample based on these two search words would not have been possible, since the word 'nationality' in Bulgarian is used as a synonym of 'nation' while in Macedonian it more often than not signifies a national minority.

Selection Criteria	Territory	Nationhood	Purpose
Early/mid-1990s	national+	national+	national+
Official texts	territory independent federation sovereignty integrity geopolitical threat	nation subjectivity citizens, people nationality ethnic, identity Macedonia	purpose interest role responsibility duty future
Public texts	+Bulgaria	+Bulgaria	+Bulgaria

Table 6. Selection Criteria for Identity Narratives of Self in Macedonia.

The technique is repeated for both states for the period of late transition (early/ mid-2000s), when the empowerment of Europeanization has already gained momentum. The two pictures are then compared, contrasted and analyzed.

The second topical area from which texts are selected aims to collect data containing interpretations predominantly concerned with the contents of the signifiers of 'Other'. Along the studied 'Self'- 'Other' dimension, these are texts interpreting conflictual issues in the bilateral relations of the two states. The analysis looks for texts dealing with the problems of recognition of statehood, the language dispute, and the status of minorities. The main difference from the sampling technique used for identifying texts on domestic articulations of identity is the temporal criterion. With external articulations of identity

narratives the analytical purpose is the same – detecting change. However, the three conflictual issues appear most salient in different moments of the transition. An overview of the main events in the official inter-state relations between Bulgaria and Macedonia, which can be produced by both foreign ministries<sup>250</sup>, points to the chronological positions of these moments. The issue of recognizing statehood is most salient in the first years of the transition and particularly around the Macedonian declaration of independence. After that it gradually decreases in salience until it almost completely disappears from political discourse. The language dispute is most salient in the late 1990s (1994-1999 and around this period). Again, after the formula for its resolution it has notably been marginalized. The issue of mutual recognition of minorities becomes most salient around the attempts for official political minority representation. Because of the turbulent reforms of the 1990s and the graver imperatives of domestic politics, this happened mainly in the new millennium. Even though there had been attempts for registering minority parties in the 1990s, the issue did not acquire such salience in view of the more urgent political agendas in the two states. So the search for texts on the three issues of conflictuality focuses around these points in time.<sup>251</sup> They also mark chronologically consecutive stages in the transition processes.

Textual sampling is performed in a similar way. The occurrence of the words ‘Macedonia’ and ‘Bulgaria’ in Bulgarian and Macedonian texts respectively in the specified periods is the immediate lead. Related semantic fields will be signified by the words ‘neighbourhood’, ‘region’ and ‘Balkans’ and their derived words in foreign policy and security documents. A further reduction is achieved by adding a control word semantically related to the respective conflictual narrative under study: statehood, language, minorities, nationhood. For example, ‘Macedonian’ and ‘language’ returns a relatively accurate sample of Bulgarian texts related to the linguistic disagreement on the recognition of Macedonian as a language in its own right, separate from the South-Western Bulgarian dialects. ‘Bulgaria’ and ‘recognition’ returns a sample of Macedonian

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<sup>250</sup> Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ overview at <http://www.mfa.bg/bg/pages/view/5314>, Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ overview at <http://www.mfa.gov.mk/?q=nadvoresna-politika/bilateralni-odnosi>.

<sup>251</sup> Obviously, this methodological choice is based on an acceptably reasonable guess: if a key text on the topic is produced in a moment which stands outside of our pre-determined focus of attention, then we should come across at least a reference to it within the corpus of texts we are working with.



texts related to Bulgaria's formal recognition of Macedonian statehood. 'Minority' and 'UMO',<sup>252</sup> returns a sample of texts in both states on the political conflict flared by a series of attempts to register a political party representing a Macedonian national minority in Bulgaria.

Selection Criteria	Bulgaria	Macedonia
<b>Statehood</b>	Macedonia+	Bulgaria+
1991-1993	independence recognition international	recognition independence sovereignty
Official texts		
Public texts		
<b>Language</b>	Macedonia+	Bulgaria+
1994-1999	language history identity nation	language history identity nation
Official texts		
Public texts		
<b>Minorities</b>	Macedonia+	Bulgaria+
1999-2006	minority descendent party UMO-Ilinden 'PIRIN'	minority ethnic party registration 'Radko'
Official texts		
Public texts		

Table 7. Selection Criteria for Identity Narratives of Other in Bulgaria and Macedonia.

To ensure the text selection by search word is not mechanical, the selected texts are then checked manually for relevance to the studied narrative. They are also analyzed against formal outcomes in bilateral relations such as declarations, bilateral agreements, exchange of visits, etc., or the lack of these. The purpose is to trace variations in the interpretations which, similarly to the first topical area, are studied 'before' and 'after' Europeanization. Unlike it, however, the two pictures are not presented in separate sections for considerations of not breaking the chronological logic of the evolution of events.

<sup>252</sup> United Macedonian Organization: the abbreviation of the name of the political party which, in its various formations, claimed to represent the Macedonian national minority in Bulgaria.

Dividing the process of data collection into these two streams presupposes not only a variation in the temporal criterion and a modification of the topical criterion. It also suggests that an adaptation of the textual source criterion could make the data search more effective. Finding relevant articulations of identity directed towards the domestic discursive space, for example, is more probable in texts produced by actors with responsibility for domestic policies. Thus, the signifier of territory is frequently subject of discussions on defense and security policies. Sampling texts produced by the minister of interior and the minister of defense could therefore be particularly helpful. Finding articulations of identity directed towards the outside, on the other hand, is more probable in texts produced by actors with responsibility for foreign policy. Foreign ministers and ambassadors could therefore be a useful starting point of the textual search.

### *Data Comparability*

Such adaptation of the data collection technique according to textual source could lead to samples of relevant data on particular issues. It cannot, however, always produce equally relevant data on all issues in the two studied cases. This is why it is used here as a supplementary technique. To ensure comparability of data, the textual search attempts consistency in consulting sources of equal standing on the different identity narratives under study. Texts produced by heads of states and governments are always the first consulted source because of the implied higher authority to formulate, articulate and interpret national positions. Parliamentary debates which form part of the parliamentary control and are publicized<sup>253</sup> are a second important source of textual data because of the representative authority of the members of parliament as speaking on behalf of their constituencies, i.e. the people. Resource ministers, heads of research institutes and other state institutions are a third regular source of textual data because of their narrow responsibilities on particular aspects of state policies (Table 8).

Data is collected from the texts accompanying the official public behaviour of these actors. The sampling focuses on various texts from the archives of these state institutions. Public speeches on specific occasions relevant to narratives of identity (such are celebrations of

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<sup>253</sup> Televised and reported on in the media.

national holidays, commemorations of historical events, key political events), official declarations, statements, positions on particular issues (border disputes, minority legislation, foreign policy stands, etc.). Public interviews for the national media or televised debates can also provide relevant data. The aim is to select data representative of what can legitimately be said about particular identity signifiers at the level of the state. What is legitimate more often than not operates on the basis of what is legal. So, a logical point for orientation is also interpretation of state legislation. Empirical data is not taken from pieces of legislation *per se*<sup>254</sup> but from official state interpretations of it. Possible data would cover interpretations of constitutional provisions and their amendments (particularly in their texts on sovereignty, borders, territory, citizenship, minorities, nationhood, state symbols), domestic and international laws regulating the respective regimes (laws on national minorities, ratifications of the European Convention of Human Rights and the jurisdiction of the Court, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, etc.), as well as official positions on European Court of Human Rights rulings, and cases of non-ratification of international legislation.

State actors	Textual sources
Head of state Head of government Speaker of parliament Members of parliament Ministers (MFA) + National media opinion-makers National research institutes representatives	Speeches on Occasions Official interviews Press Conferences Declarations Positions Legislation & Commentary + Media analyses Public research output

Table 8. Source and Form Criteria for Text Collection.

Again, achieving complete parity in the collected data has not been possible because of the mutually independent public behaviour of state actors in the two states. For example, the Bulgarian prime minister's statement on the political will to make progress in the language dispute because of the necessity to improve cross-border transport infrastructure has not been matched by a statement on the issue by the Macedonian prime minister. But more

<sup>254</sup> Even though the legal framework can be seen to represent codified consensual positions on certain issues.

often than not comparable data on certain issues of interest can be collected around key points in the bilateral relations. The ban on registering a political party representing the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria, for example, prompts articulations on the issue at various levels from both sides. The same is valid for the Macedonian ban on registering a Bulgarian party. At the same time, silence on certain issues can also be indicative of the contents of narratives of identity. Bulgarian recognition of Macedonian statehood, for example, became a central discursive element of Bulgarian politics at the time but in Macedonia it hardly received any but formal acknowledgement. The discrepancy is analyzed in view of the position and function of the 'Other' in the two national identity narratives.

Disparities in the collectable data on issues such as this are addressed by attempting to establish what else is being said on the topic and when. In the case of Bulgarian recognition of Macedonian independent statehood, for example, occurrences of articulations appear only on several formal occasions around the time of the event. Only later discourse on the issue begins to normalize and both positive and critical interpretations can be found. Certain issues are consistently not tackled at state level. In Bulgaria, for example, references to the ban on registration of the pro-Macedonian party are generally not contained in the rhetoric of the president. If they do appear, it is as a confirmation of the authority of the judiciary to competently rule on the issue. In Macedonia, on the other hand, concern for the status of Macedonian communities in Bulgaria frequently appears as a central issue of identity politics at all levels. The discrepancy is analyzed in terms of the different interpretations of the integrity of the nation and the place of national minorities in its structure. In general, disparities in the collectable data are addressed through contextual analysis of the official positions on the concerned issues and through discourse analysis of what data is available in other points in time.

### *Data Availability*

Other than these disparities in the articulation on specific issues, access to data has been unproblematic. Since the investigation uses only official texts directed at wide national

audiences, the data is publicly accessible through the institutional archives. Most of it has been transferred to electronic contents and/ or is available online. When it has not (mostly data from the early 1990s), it can be consulted upon request. In the majority of the archives digital photocopying was permitted, which enabled transferring texts to electronic format and facilitated the contents analysis by search words. Texts whose photocopying was not permitted were analyzed for relevance manually. Given the large volume of available data, manual search cannot be exhaustive but random sampling following the criteria outlined above returns relevant data for a qualitative analysis based in an anti-foundationalist interpretative epistemology. The same is true for collecting data on representations from the leading media archives from the early years of the studied period, which have largely been accessible only physically. The search has been focused around key chronological moments determined by the salience of the studied narratives. This methodological decision is based on the assumption that strategies of identity articulation and identity construction in the two states should be more intensive when a significant identity-related event occurs or when a contested element of the identity construction cannot be realized. Again, this necessarily excludes texts possibly relevant to the fuller understanding of the respective identity constructions if they stand outside the pre-specified temporal limits. Such omission is justified through the assumption that if a key identity related event occurred outside the studied timeframe, then at least a reference to it should be found inside it. The guided technique of data collection contains a more visible element of subjective judgment than random sampling but overall it has been balanced by the inevitable element of subjectivity required in the sifting of data gathered through random word searches. Moreover, in interpretative research subjectivity is acknowledged *a priori* as a factor and is used as an advantage in the analysis. Moreover, attempting to deny its interference through presumed scientific objectivity is generally viewed with suspicion.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> In view of Foucault's conceptualization of discursive formations, the notion of objectivity becomes irrelevant – Foucault, *Archaeology*.

The collected data has been analyzed in the original languages in which it has been produced (Bulgarian and Macedonian) in both of which this author is fluent. Translation of the quoted texts is the author's unless otherwise specified.

### ***Identity Change and Inference***

As pointed out above, one of the principal uses language is being put to in the discursive construction of national identity is to tell the story of the nation as an uninterrupted narrative. That narrative is constructed on the basis of several key elements which have been referred to as 'identity signifiers'. The contents and salience of identity signifiers change over time. The particular discursive pattern of identity signifiers in one point in time is indicative of the state's national identity in that point. So identifying changes in the pattern of signifiers should be indicative of transforming identity. The pattern may change in a variety of ways. Some interpretations may appear or disappear over time. Some may increase or decrease in salience but remain present. The correlation between certain signifiers may change. In any case, the changed interpretations of the signifiers will produce a different discursive pattern of identity, leading to the exclusion of certain stories and the inclusion of others. It is precisely this narrative re-construction that allows transcending antagonisms based in identity.

The conclusions generated on the basis of the corpus of selected data suggest that where empowering the discourse of Europeanization and establishing its hegemony re-articulated the contents of identity signifiers and re-organized their patterns in the two states in a credible manner, it prompted the gradual exclusion of conflictual narratives. Ultimately, this led to the marginalization of interpretations of nationalism and stabilized the hegemony of the discourse of Europeanization. Where the discourse of Europeanization did not succeed in capturing identity signifiers and providing credible readings of their contents, interpretations of nationalism remained salient and threatened the hegemony of Europeanization.

Comparing and contrasting the studied identity narratives allows assessing this claim without aiming at universal validity. The purpose of the study is to explore the mechanisms of accommodating national identity narratives within the discourse of Europeanization in a specific Balkan context. It aims to establish the effects of Europeanization on national identity re-narration, to see how Europeanization's reading of national identity, in turn, affects the stability of the hegemonic discourse, and to find out what happens to interpretations of nationalism. The conclusions reached in the investigation uncover the specificities of accommodation of Bulgaria's and Macedonia's national identity narratives in the discourse of 'Europe' over a particular period of time – the transition to democracy. In this sense they contribute to Area Studies academic knowledge. But they also offer the possibility of descriptive inference on the mechanisms of reading national identity in the context of EU enlargement to the former communist space and particularly to the Balkan region. After mapping out the discursive contexts structuring the beginning of transition in both states, the following chapters demonstrate how these conclusions have been reached.



The first part of the dissertation laid out the theoretical, meta-theoretical and methodological background of the investigation, introducing poststructuralist discourse theory as an insightful perspective for studying national identity change in Europe. Through its main analytical tool – discourse analysis – this perspective offers a promising method of exploring the transformations which the discourse of Europeanization induces in national identity narratives and which it undergoes in the hegemonic struggle with the discourse of nationalism. This proves its applicability in an analysis of the role of national identity in the project of European integration, particularly in the context of EU enlargement. The second part of the dissertation presents the empirical investigation itself. Analyzing the collected data, the analysis aims to draw valid conclusions about national identity change in the context of Europeanization. It starts by introducing the discursive contexts which shaped national identity narratives at the beginning of the studied period – Chapter V. Chapter VI, VII and VIII offer analyses of selected national identity narratives from the two case studies of Bulgaria and Macedonia. They aim to identify change in the narration of the national stories in the process of empowering the discourse of Europeanization by comparing and contrasting the different cases both synchronically and diachronically. The analytical outcomes of this investigation are then used to demonstrate the validity of the central claim of the dissertation in the concluding chapter, linking the empirical investigation back to the theoretical background of the study and its main argument. Chapter IX applies the conclusions arrived at in Part II to the analytical framework drawn in Part I. Its purpose is to demonstrate how the investigation has enhanced existing understanding of the role of national identity in Europe by studying its narrative transformations in the changing discursive environment of two Balkan states.



# **PART II**

# **CASES**

## CHAPTER V

### NATIONALISM AS DISCURSIVE CONTEXT:

#### IN SEARCH OF CREDIBLE IDENTITY

An analysis of national identity narratives cannot be valid without an elaborate understanding of the hegemonic discourses which upheld these narratives, shaping the meaning of social reality. This dissertation begins the study of national identity from the context of hegemonic nationalism. With the fall of the Iron Curtain the discourse of nationalism quickly came back to the political fore in the former communist space. The reasons for this are diverse. To begin with, national identity had never been truly supplanted by non-national communist state identities. It had had to publicly give way to the hegemonic discourse of party ideology empowered, largely coercively, to uphold the project of 'people's' or 'socialist' republics. But despite concerted attempts to substitute loyalties to the national state with loyalty to the communist party and thus, symbolically, to the international communist proletariat, party ideology inevitably operated within the framework of the nation-state<sup>256</sup>. Therefore, it could never fully dislocate the discourse of the nation. Second, when faced with the task of (re-)building democratic statehood from the rubble of totalitarian regimes, the former communist states could not take recourse to other narratives representing to such extent the entirety of the population as a human collectivity, and thus providing the legitimacy to undertake the necessary, often taxing, reforms. It was the story of the nation surviving the ordeal of communism which offered a source of self-identification with the new state for all of its citizens.<sup>257</sup> Furthermore, and this is significant, despite the instrumentalization by the communist regimes of varieties of

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<sup>256</sup> Even when it comprised a federation, like in the Soviet or Yugoslav cases.

<sup>257</sup> This is to explain as well the wave of secessions after the breakup of communism: when the nation represented only a small part of the population of the state, it demanded the right to establish a state of its own.

nationalisms at different points in time, national identity did provide a form of oppositional identity of dissent from the identity of 'comradeship' in the totalitarian state. In the immediate context of regime change this oppositional potential gave rise to the discourse of nationalism as a political ideology in the new states.

### ***The Context of Rising Nationalism in Bulgaria***

In the Bulgarian case, just as in all post-communist states, this phenomenon had its peculiarities. Bulgaria fostered one of the communist regimes which made extensive<sup>258</sup> use of the arsenal of nationalism in tightening its grip to power.<sup>259</sup> One of its undertakings with most profound consequences for the ethno-national peace in the country was the large-scale governmental assimilation campaign initiated in the early 1980s against Bulgaria's Turkish minority<sup>260</sup>. The societal uproar the campaign caused served as a catalyst for mobilizing civil and intellectual dissent against the regime and was a factor in eventually negotiating the regime change.<sup>261</sup> A strong association was thus created between the communist past and aggressive nationalism. This was taken up by the democratic opposition, which highlighted the link in its attempt to mobilize greater public support for reform. The following excerpt illustrates some of the key points in this rhetorical strategy:

*"The 'nationalists' [...] sided with the Bulgarian Communist Party [here at the roundtable talks][...] which is understandable because most of these so called patriots are [...] members of the party [...]. But it is not understandable why the [...]Communists agree to this shameful compromise: to allow among their members people instigating nationally-based hatred, violating the constitution (namely*

<sup>258</sup> Though not consistent: even though it launched large-scale nationalist campaigns, they were often abandoned half-way through with a change in the Soviet position (policies towards Macedonia by 1956) or were initiated randomly with changes in the domestic environment (campaigns towards the ethnic Turks from 1970s).

<sup>259</sup> Katerina Popova and Marko Hajdinjak (eds.), *Forced ethnic migrations on the Balkans: consequences and rebuilding of societies* (Sofia: International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 2006).

<sup>260</sup> The largest ethno-national minority group in the country.

<sup>261</sup> Albert Melone, 'Bulgaria's National Roundtable Talks and the Politics of Accommodation', *International Political Science Review* 15(3), (1994): 257-273, also W. Höpken, 'From Religious Identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria before, under and since Communism', H. Poulton and S. Taji-Farouki (eds.), *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State* (Hurst, 1997), 54-81.

*Art.35, Para.4), who could therefore immediately be brought to justice under the acting Penal Code, people swinging a horse tail<sup>262</sup>, singing 'Unrest at the Bosphorus'<sup>263</sup>, and demanding physical reprisal with the leaders of the Union of the Democratic Forces<sup>264</sup>. They baffled entire democratic Europe with the wave of outdated nationalism which they roused [...] in Sofia and the rest of the country. [...] This compromise is unwanted and dangerous. It demonstrates that the Communists are still unable to distance themselves from the policy of violence which they have led so far with the national question.'"<sup>265</sup>*

The chair person of the first independent anti-communist organization in Bulgaria, speaking at the Roundtable Talks which negotiated the peaceful regime change, performs an act of identity constitution. He starts by re-enforcing the chain of equivalence between the communist party and nationalism through the inverted causal confirmation of the logic that 'the 'nationalists' sided with (the communists)' because 'most of these [...] are members of the party'. Then he immediately rhetorically questions the morality ('shameful') and reason ('not understandable') of this union to demonstrate its unacceptability. First he proclaims its illegality (Art. 35, Para. 4 of the then acting Constitution of 1971 prohibited 'preaching of hatred [...] based on [...] national affiliation [...] and stipulated its penalization'<sup>266</sup>) and calls for its condemnation ('immediately be brought to justice'). He then goes on to link the claim of these 'so called patriots' with the most preposterous symbols of aggressive nationalism in Bulgaria: the swinging of a horse-tail as in the nomadic times of the founder of the first Bulgarian state on the Balkans<sup>267</sup>, and singing a song glorifying an alleged brief Bulgarian conquest of the Balkan peninsula<sup>268</sup>. References to these symbolic fields aim at positioning such behaviour in the long gone

<sup>262</sup> A symbol of the early medieval proto-Bulgarians who were nomads.

<sup>263</sup> A poem by the Bulgarian author Ivan Vazov turned into a nationalist march.

<sup>264</sup> The UDF movement came to represent the democratic opposition and became the first oppositional party in post-communist Bulgaria.

<sup>265</sup> Rumen Vodenicharov, chair person of the Independent Society for the Protection of Human Rights, the first independent anti-communist organization in Bulgaria, speaking at the First Plenary Session of the National Roundtable Talks on 29th Jan 1990 from 10am, verbatim report.

<sup>266</sup> Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria of 1971 available at <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/19>.

<sup>267</sup> The Bulgarian principality of Khan Asparuh established in 681.

<sup>268</sup> In Bulgarian historiography this happened during the rule of the Bulgarian king Simeon I, called 'The Great' in the lyrics of the song.

past. Completing the list with 'demands for physical reprisal with the leaders of UDF' aims at equating it with the obvious absurdity of such demands in the civilized world of today, as well as with the animosity against the 'democratic forces' and their 'leaders', thus demonstrating its incompatibility with the idea of decommunization. This rhetorical move is re-enforced by the next reference to the 'baffling' of Europe (suggesting nationalism has no place there) and the repeated positioning of nationalism in the past (it is explicitly called 'outdated'). On the basis of this incompatibility of nationalism with reform and the democratic European future, it is condemned by the speaker as 'unwanted and dangerous', pointing to the threat of not distancing from the violence of the past.

A month earlier one of the co-founders of the non-governmental public organization Committee for National Reconciliation<sup>269</sup> reads its Founding Statute in the air of Radio *Free Europe*. Its concluding paragraph is particularly engaging in the same sense:

*"Brothers and sisters, nationally-based hatred is a heinous prejudice with a destructive effect over the individual, it carries with it only tears, blood and suffering. Citizens of Bulgaria, [...] cooperate with [...] the Committee for National Reconciliation [...] [T]his is needed in the name of democracy, rule of law, in the name of the future. Sofia, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1989."*<sup>270</sup>

Summoning support for her call for national reconciliation, the author addresses her audience by invoking a blood relation ('brothers and sisters') which is a rhetorical strategy typical for nationalist discourse. Taking recourse to the nationalists' rhetorical arsenal, the speaker attempts to engage a widest possible audience, including the presumed supporters of the very ideology she needs to condemn, by addressing them as part of the same community. Elaborating on the blood relation, she goes on to describe the effects of nationalism as physical agony ('tears, blood and suffering') in order to renounce it. On the basis of this, she attempts to rhetorically re-position the community: in the following sentence she replaces the blood relation which united her audience initially with a new

<sup>269</sup> Antonina Zheliazkova, an established academic who publicly opposed the assimilation campaign against the Turks and participated in the first dissident organizations, the Rousse Committee and the Committee for Glasnost and Perestroika.

<sup>270</sup> Interview for Radio Free Europe by Romyana Uzunova, Roll No. 174, accessible in transliteration at [http://www.omda.bg/arhiv/romyana\\_uzunova/romyana\\_sled\\_jivkov\\_8.html](http://www.omda.bg/arhiv/romyana_uzunova/romyana_sled_jivkov_8.html).

relation, citizenship ('citizens of Bulgaria'). This rhetorical move is supported by the appeal that only such repositioning could lead Bulgaria to the values it craves ('democracy, rule of law') and could take it from the condemned past to the desired future ('in the name of the future').

In the rhetoric of the mobilizing democratic opposition, nationalism is being positioned as the exact opposite of democracy, thus re-affirming its place in the past. Furthermore, it is repeatedly being pointed to as the reason for the continuing inter-ethnic tensions. The Chief Mufti, representing the Muslim community in Bulgaria, points out that the Muslims participate in the Roundtable Talks only as guests because members of the ultra-nationalist organization Nationwide Committee for the Protection of National Interests form part of the quota from the government.<sup>271</sup> By radically distinguishing democracy (the possible future) from nationalism (the condemned past) and insisting on their incompatibility, the members of the democratic opposition intend to dissociate themselves from the government, assert their legitimacy as carriers of the 'future' and thus mobilize as great popular support as possible, including by engaging the votes of the formerly repressed Bulgarian ethnic Turks. At the same time, however, the centrality of the 'nationalist' motif as a borderline of identification perpetuated the salience of nationalist discourse and further politicized the issue of national identity.

This division was also exacerbated because of the communist successor party's prolonged grip to power<sup>272</sup>: at the first free parliamentary elections in 1990 the socialists got 210 out of 400 seats in Parliament and at the second in 1991, 106 out of 240.<sup>273</sup> To re-gain legitimacy for their presence in the state structures, they tried to gradually dissociate from the negative image of the 'national question'<sup>274</sup> without losing credibility in political stance. By attempting to re-negotiate a particular understanding of 'nationalism' as legitimate, in the meanwhile publicly rendering support to the efforts for redress of the

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<sup>271</sup> Verbatim report from the Roundtable Talks on 29th Jan 1990 from 10am.

<sup>272</sup> After 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1990 Bulgarian Socialist Party.

<sup>273</sup> At the Roundtable Talks, which effectively negotiated the peaceful change of regime, the deal stricken ensured sufficient resources for the former communists to largely remain in the leading echelons of state power for almost the entire decade to come.

<sup>274</sup> The term used for designating the inter-ethnic problems inherited from the totalitarian era.

repressed, they ensured that nationalist discourse remained present into the discursive space of Bulgarian state politics of the early transition.

Already during the preliminary Roundtable Talks the prime minister-to-be<sup>275</sup> and other members of the socialist leadership<sup>276</sup> rhetorically perform such attempts of dissociation from immediate responsibility for the assimilatory campaigns by pointing to the alleged roots of the inter-ethnic problem in the Balkan wars of 1912-13, i.e. much before the establishment of the regime:

*"[I]f we attempt [...] to analyze the problem and its genesis, we should go back much beyond 1984. [...] All of us should be extremely cautious in our interpretations of actions whose motivations we should first be able to understand. They go back to the Balkan wars."<sup>277</sup> "I would suggest not to discuss history now [...] because time does not wait for us. If we are unable to agree [on a joint declaration on the 'national question'] by tomorrow night at the latest [...] then there is no point in doing it."<sup>278</sup>*

Other than shifting the roots of the inter-ethnic conflict to a period outside the communist regime and suggesting exculpating circumstances for the perpetrators, the speaker indicates that the background to the conflict is so complex that not everybody can really comprehend it, thus hinting at the great danger ('should be extremely cautious') of tackling the issue by the un-learned majority. By adding urgency to the extremely painful and still raw problem of national reconciliation, the 'strategist' of the Socialist Party<sup>279</sup> actually impedes the very task whose completion he is presumably calling for. The repeated reasoning behind such an ambivalent call is the idea that the problem pertains to the field of history and should rest there. Factually imprecise (for Bulgaria, the Balkan wars

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<sup>275</sup> Andrey Lukanov, whose name is tightly linked to the execution of the repressions against the Bulgarian Turks in 1985 but who is to head a new Government in 1990. See verbatim reports from the 49<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the 36<sup>th</sup> National Assembly discussing the national minorities and the ethnic question, available at <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/plenaryst>.

<sup>276</sup> Aleksander Lilov, long-term member of the totalitarian State Council and future long-term member of parliaments from 1990, as well as head of the leadership of the Socialist Party from 1990.

<sup>277</sup> Preliminary Roundtable consultations of the government with the leaders of the democratic opposition on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1990 from 5.30pm, verbatim report.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> As Lilov has often been referred to in the media.

were about minorities outside its borders, not inside), the governmental line is obviously consistent in re-positioning the roots of the national problem from the timeframe of the totalitarian rule to decades before that in an attempt to transfer the blame.

At the same time, another discursive line taken up by the socialist government works for the re-formulation of the discredited notion of 'nationalism' into a political ideology compatible with post-communist politics. In the immediate aftermath of the regime change the contextual usage of the term 'nationalism' refers to the danger of 'nationalist passions'<sup>280</sup>, to 'chauvinist ideas'<sup>281</sup>, to dealing with 'nationally-based hatred'<sup>282</sup>. In an attempt to distance the signifier of nationalism from the context of the irrational and destructive, nationalism is subtly being re-introduced to the public in a new light: as the ideology of national unity and the national interest. Evidence of this provides the establishment of the Nationwide Committee for the Protection of the *National Interests*, which legitimately takes part in the Roundtable Talks as a nationalist organization. One of its suggestions is re-formulating the controversial Art.1 of the 1971 Constitution to state that '[...] Bulgaria is a national state [...]'.<sup>283</sup> The consultant from the Committee explains that this controversial constitutional provision in the context of inter-ethnic tension is referring to the European notion of the 'nation-state', going on to elaborate on the 'nation-state' as a Western European 'achievement'.<sup>284</sup> Another rhetorical strategy of repositioning the signifiers of nationalist discourse is the constant reference on behalf of the socialists to 'the nation' (and not 'the people') as the addressee community of the reforms. Upon exiting the Roundtable talks to assume his role as the prime minister, Lukanov, for example, expresses his good wishes to the negotiators for 'the benefit of the Bulgarian nation'.<sup>285</sup> Despite the significant overlap of usage between the terms 'nation' and 'people', they are not interchangeable. The move to constitute the community as a 'nation' and not a 'people' subtly appeals to the national sentiment of the majority and suggests the relevance of a nationalist policy. Paradoxically, the established formula of

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<sup>280</sup> Verbatim report from the Roundtable Talks, 349.

<sup>281</sup> Verbatim report from the Roundtable Talks, 75.

<sup>282</sup> Verbatim report from the Roundtable Talks, 311.

<sup>283</sup> Kiril Haramiev, consultant of the Committee, speaking at the Roundtable Talks Verbatim report, 360.

<sup>284</sup> Verbatim report from the Roundtable Talks, 362.

<sup>285</sup> Verbatim report from the Roundtable Talks, 376.



‘national unity’ (referring to the desired solution of the inter-ethnic conflict), turned into one of the consensual catch-phrases of the time, also serves such a purpose. Its endless repetition during the Roundtable Talks and the numerous documents they produced, as well as during the plenary sessions of the Grand National Assembly, eventually dimmed the paradoxical edges of the idea to successfully accommodate ethnic minorities through achieving a monolithic nation. This gave the use of the formula ‘national unity’ an aura of highest common good, again subtly legitimizing nationalist discourse. In the context of ethnically divided society on the verge of conflict the political use of the adjective ‘national’ should be cautious because it might not be immediately clear who/ what it signifies. Insisting on acting in the interest of ‘the nation’ (and not the people, society, or the state) clearly constitutes a political community identified along the lines of nationhood, questioning any minority element’s membership in it, and thus increasing its antagonistic potential.

The strong association of the totalitarian regime with aggressive nationalism, on the one hand, and the fact that a vast number of its representatives remained in power after its negotiated change, on the other, ensured the relevance of nationalist discourse to everyday politics in the immediate years after the fall of totalitarianism. Despite the democratic opposition’s attempts to dissociate politics of reform from the burden of nationalism, too much controversy revolved around the ‘national question’ in the early months and years of the regime change for such a move to succeed – at least not in the short term. By refusing to unambiguously accept responsibility for the assimilation campaigns, the socialists, too, exacerbated the controversy because many of them remained in public office and continued to head numerous state institutions despite direct participation in the ideological and practical preparation of the ‘Revival Process’<sup>286</sup>. By attempting to re-define the concept of nationalism in line with the notions of national uniqueness, national interest, and national policy in order to legitimize their stay in power, the socialists impeded the dissociation of politics from the discursive field of nationalism. The increased salience of nationalist rhetoric left its imprint upon the reading of national identity in Bulgaria in the years following the regime change.

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<sup>286</sup> The propaganda name of the communist regime’s assimilatory campaigns against the Turks.

### ***Rising Nationalism in Macedonia***

In line with the rest of the post-communist space, Macedonia also witnessed a rise of nationalist rhetoric in the years immediately following the fall of the Iron Curtain but the sub-contexts which facilitated it were distinctly different from the Bulgarian case. They were determined by the secession from the federation, the domestic majority-minority relations, and the regional inter-state relations.

#### *The Context of Secession*

First recognized as a state within the Yugoslav federation in 1946<sup>287</sup>, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia<sup>288</sup> established the fundament of statehood in the spirit of 'brotherhood and unity'<sup>289</sup> with the rest of the Yugoslav republics. Even though the republics were instituted along national lines, the national element was excluded from the ideology upholding the power of the socialist state. With the disintegration of the federation, nationalism came to the fore both as a consequence of the re-stated claims for independent statehood along national lines and as a response to the political uncertainty which these claims created within the federation. Thus, one of the structural factors for the rise of Macedonian nationalism in the beginning of the 1990s was the context of prospective secession from federation.

Unlike Bulgaria, however, nationalist discourse in Macedonia became associated with change, emancipation and the future, whereas the past remained predominantly linked to the integrationist ideas of commonality within the socialist federation. It was in the context of renouncing the past and embarking upon the idea of an independent Macedonian state as the grand political project of the present that nationalist discourse was initially upheld. Logically, this occurred within the discussion on the precise form of statehood that best suited the people of Macedonia, which gradually detached the

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<sup>287</sup> Violeta Petroska-Beska and Mirjana Najcavska, *Macedonia: understanding history, preventing future conflict* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2004).

<sup>288</sup> After 1963 when the name replaced the 'People's Republic of Macedonia' with the re-naming of the Federation.

<sup>289</sup> The popular Yugoslav slogan characterizing the union in the federation.

narrative from the discourse of federation and linked it to the national state interpreted as an ethically superior form of statehood. Ascribing the blame for the tense inter-ethnic and inter-republican relations in Yugoslavia to the totalitarian system which kept the federation together, the Macedonian member of the Yugoslav Presidium declares in the first Macedonian multi-party parliament:

*"A radical transformation is needed. We have no right to defend a system of relations which antagonizes the peoples and the people, this is anti-civilizational."*<sup>290</sup>

Prohibiting the defense of the disintegrating federation as illegitimate ('we have no right') and backward ('anti-civilizational') because of its destructive effects at an individual ('the people') and national level ('the peoples') is a clear indication of the political direction which the Macedonian representative to the federation appeals for. In the following sentence he calls for following 'our own interests [...] independent from anybody'<sup>291</sup> stating that the federation currently represents 'a mystification around abstract, artificial, and supra-national interests'<sup>292</sup>. Referring to a clearly identifiable category (self interest) and juxtaposing it to the 'mystification [of] supra-national interests' implicitly introduces the notion of 'national interests' as superior. This rhetorical move is re-enforced by the chain of equivalence established between the categories of 'abstract', 'artificial', and 'supra-national' and their relation to the field of the mystique. Having thus established the discursive hierarchy, Tupurkovski explicitly introduces the category of the national interest as 'non-negotiable', 'vital', and integral to the 'Macedonian national question.'<sup>293</sup> The subsequent parliamentary discussion<sup>294</sup>, already openly, denounces the previous totalitarian regime as:

<sup>290</sup> Vasil Tupurkovski, Macedonian Member of the Yugoslav Presidium speaking at the First Plenary Session of the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 86 at <http://www.sobranie.mk/ext/sessions.aspx?Id=8440FB6B-A414-4749-9270-5CB070CE4997>.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>294</sup> On the future place of Macedonia in the federation.

*"[maintaining] an appearance of inter-national peace and harmony through terror and depression [...] at the same time creating faceless collectivities and invented fictive well-being."*<sup>295</sup>

Again, the regime is accused of faking, inventing, pretending, repeatedly confirming the link between the supra-national and the non-real, thus implying the reality and relevance of the national. This is also evident in the accusation of depersonalizing the national community (by creating 'faceless' collectivities) as an act of transgression. The rhetorical renunciation of the supra-national state community as oppressive and the rhetorical vindication of the national community as ethically superior established the context which initially empowered Macedonian nationalist discourse in the beginning of democratic parliamentary life in the republic. At the same time, fully conscious of its negative connotations, the new Macedonian political élite is systematically avoiding direct references to nationalism in pursuing the project of independent statehood. Instead, its legitimacy is constructed around the signifiers of the Macedonian people as the source of state sovereignty, the Macedonian national interest, and the Macedonian national question. In the context of disengagement from federation these signifiers legitimized the claim for independent statehood.

Pleading for the particular responsibility of the parliamentarians for 'the treatment of the Macedonian national question'<sup>296</sup> and clarifying that 'the Macedonian national ideal is unification'<sup>297</sup>, Tupurkovski draws parallels between this political project, on the one hand, and European integration, German unification, and globalization, on the other, thus concluding that 'the Macedonian question [in this context] is an international and even universal question'<sup>298</sup>. Positioning the problem of Macedonian statehood and nationhood into such a radically widened context serves the purposes of legitimization.

*"We respect the right of self-determination of every people, the right to sovereignly decide its destiny, and we reject any interpretation of this right which places limits*

<sup>295</sup> Todor Petrov speaking at the First Plenary Session of the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 95.

<sup>296</sup> Tupurkovski, *ibid.*, 87.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

*on its realization. The Macedonian people has continually been in possession of this natural sovereign right and will use it in line with its historical and national interests.”*<sup>299</sup>

Taking recourse to the underlying principle of modern nationalism – the right of self-determination – the president of the republic declares absolute support for it (‘we reject any [...] limits’). Repeatedly pointing to the Macedonian people as the carrier of sovereignty (‘[the] people ...sovereignly decides’ and ‘[the] people has [...] been in possession of this [...] sovereign right’), he confirms the ‘natural’ character of this right and its importance for the realization of interests. He goes on to declare:

*“Macedonia speaks with others as the national state of the Macedonian people<sup>300</sup> [...] and defends its vital national and state interests [...] as its own and inviolable right [thus offering] guarantee for the rights of all Macedonian citizens in human and national sense.”*<sup>301</sup>

Constituting the state as a subject (‘speaks with others’, ‘defends its [...] interests’, ‘[has] right[s]’) on the basis of nationality also reveals the relevance of basic assumptions of nationalism. This is further confirmed by the duality of rights that are attributed to Macedonian citizens (‘human’ and ‘national’). But while human rights are universally recognized for all citizens of all states, the suggestion that national rights also need guarantee alludes to a national collectivity under threat, and implies the legitimacy of the discourse of nationalism.

Despite the obvious relevance of nationalism, however, explicit references to it are only made with regard to external and internal ‘Others’, never with regard to the legitimate Macedonian national ‘Self’:

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<sup>299</sup> Vladimir Mitkov, President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia speaking at the First Plenary Session of the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 85.

<sup>300</sup> The full quote includes ‘and all its citizens’ as the subjects of the state.

<sup>301</sup> Vladimir Mitkov, *ibid.*, 85.

*"[...] we cannot speak of Macedonian nationalism. [Because neither of us wants a foot of land belonging to others]." <sup>302</sup>*

Furthermore, when made reference to, nationalism is always positioned next to some of its extreme or illegitimate forms, indicating an attempt for dissociation from it. With regard to Yugoslavia as the immediate external 'Other' symbolizing the federative past, 'nationalism' and 'chauvinism' go hand in hand from the very beginning of the federation in 1945<sup>303</sup>:

*"the declarative character of the Constitution brought Yugoslavia to the current height of the rampages of chauvinism and nationalism" <sup>304</sup>.*

*"[...] the rampages of chauvinism, separatism and bloody inter-national collisions [...] indicate that in multinational states, where in the name of the peoples [...] ruled totalitarian regimes and élites, the national question was repressed and inter-national relations brought to a boiling point." <sup>305</sup>*

The slightly paradoxical suggestion that the damages caused by nationalism are characteristic of multi-national states are another rhetorical blow against the political option of 'otherness' (the federation) and re-affirming the political validity of the project of 'Self'-emancipation (independent statehood).

With regard to the sizeable Albanian minority within the Macedonian republic, constituted as the internal 'Other', nationalism is still relevant:

*"[in the Western parts of Macedonia] we are witnessing a long-term division from the positions of Albanian nationalism and separatism." <sup>306</sup>*

Pointing to nationalism and separatism as a threat to the integrity of the state ('long term division') when it comes to the Albanian minority, positions the Albanian community in a chain of difference from the Macedonian community. In the Macedonian context both

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<sup>302</sup> Dimitar Galev, Agrarian Party of Macedonia 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 102.

<sup>303</sup> Todor Petrov, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 92.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>306</sup> Dushko Georgievski, 4<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 137.

nationalism (implicitly) and separatism (explicitly) are interpreted as natural, sovereign and inviolable rights of the Macedonian people and are defended as such. Denouncing 'Albanian nationalism and separatism' as a threat re-affirms Albanian 'otherness' within the boundaries of the Macedonian republic and highlights the second important context which shaped the rise of Macedonian nationalism in the post-socialist years.

### *The Context of Minority Accommodation*

The underlying feature of the rhetoric preparing the ground for an independent Macedonian state revolved around the idea of a national state for the Macedonian nation. As demonstrated above, the political project of independent statehood was legitimized through the notions of realizing the Macedonian national and historical interest, referring to the historical standing of the Macedonian question and confirming the inviolable sovereignty of the Macedonian people. This legitimization, however, did not take account of the sizeable non-Macedonian component of the Macedonian republic – the Albanian minority. Attempting to exclude the Albanians from the community constituted at state level conditioned a long-term inter-ethnic confrontation and to a large extent determined the type of statehood the newly independent republic achieved in the decade following independence. At the same time this confrontation perpetuated the discourse of Macedonian nationalism, empowered initially with the political project of independence:

*"We should all be clear that no peoples live in Macedonia. Macedonia is the state of the Macedonian people."*<sup>307</sup>

Articulating the unambiguous co-relation between nation ('the Macedonian people') and state, on the one hand, and denying the same status to any other community ('no peoples live [here]') establishes a clear hierarchy in which the Macedonian national community dominates the project of statehood. This dominant position is further justified through appeals for historical justice:

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<sup>307</sup> Mihail Panovski, VMRO-DPMNE, 1<sup>st</sup> plenary session, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 100.

*"[the Macedonian] population has fought for its freedom for centuries and now when the time has come for it to live in freedom in its own land, [it cannot accept] a governor from [Albanian] nationality"*<sup>308</sup>

Despite the newly democratic character of the Macedonian republic proclaimed on countless occasions in the immediate context of the first democratic elections<sup>309</sup> and the fact that it was precisely the principles of democracy that backed the Macedonian claim for independence (such is the will of the Macedonian people<sup>310</sup>), in the Albanian context considerations of democratic representation are immediately discarded as unsubstantial. The discrepancy in the official line re-affirms the position of inequality. In the discussions on appointing a governor for the predominantly Albanian populated Western area of the republic<sup>311</sup>, it is declared:

*"If we want to cherish love [between the Albanians and the Macedonians] it needs to be known that this is Macedonian land and you need to be clear, the governor has to be Macedonian."*<sup>312</sup>

Categorically stating that the only way for a harmonious relationship between the two communities (the 'love' relationship which the Albanian representative had called for<sup>313</sup>) is by accepting the formula of Macedonian domination over the principle of democratic representation (valid for the rest of Macedonia), again prescribes a position of subordination for the ethnic Albanians, maintained by the instructive tone in the second person plural ('you need to be clear').

This rhetorical line is somewhat moderated by the recognition of the right of the Albanian minority to be included in the project of statehood. The new president of the republic Kiro Gligorov, addressing the assembly which elected him, suggests the formula of compromise:

<sup>308</sup> Kiril Kovachevski, 4<sup>th</sup> session, 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 146.

<sup>309</sup> See 1<sup>st</sup> plenary session verbatim report 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991.

<sup>310</sup> This argument is detectable in key political rhetoric from the period.

<sup>311</sup> Around the town of Tetovo.

<sup>312</sup> Kiril Kovachevski 4<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 146.

<sup>313</sup> In the words of Abdurahman Haliti, 4<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 85.



*"[...] to build a sovereign and modern legal state [...] for the Macedonian people, for the other nationalities which live [in Macedonia], for all citizens of Macedonia."*<sup>314</sup>

The formula maintains the position of difference ('the people' against 'the other nationalities'), which cannot be discarded without major re-formulation of the claim for Macedonian independent statehood, but it offers a realm of commonality: Macedonian citizenship. United along the lines of citizenship, the members of the Albanian ethnic majority can enjoy the same civil rights as the rest of the Macedonian citizens. Moreover, they can do so irrespective of their national identity – they are recognized as a nationality. This is in contrast to Bulgaria at the time, where ethnic minorities could participate in the state community only as long as they subscribed to Bulgarian national identity renouncing their background nationality. In Bulgaria they had been designated as 'ethnic' communities (not 'national'), having Bulgarian national self-identification, despite their different ethnic origins. Macedonia did recognize divergent national identities. However, this recognition served the dual purpose of offering a formula of inclusion into the project of statehood *and* maintaining the status of 'otherness'. Having a different *nationality* excluded the ethnic Albanians from the community of the Macedonian *people*. It was clear, though, that without a formula of inclusion, there could be no meaningful political consensus over statehood:

*"The fact that the representatives of all nationalities supported my election [...] I appreciate as providing [me with] legitimacy [...] to represent the Macedonian people, all nationalities, and all residents of Macedonia."*<sup>315</sup>

As Gligorov notes, the election of a new head of state could not be legitimate if the Albanian minority did not participate in it. This recognition is telling of the political bargaining power of the Albanian majority and its role in shaping the identity of the newly independent state. Unlike Bulgaria, where the largest ethnic minority was not included in the roundtable talks for negotiating the new power deal, and was given access to state power only after the negotiations had established the new *status quo*, the Macedonian

<sup>314</sup> Kiro Gligorov, 5<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 17.

<sup>315</sup> Kiro Gligorov, 5<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 16.

Albanians participated in its negotiation right from the start. Fully aware that their inclusion depended on the re-formulation of the political project for a Macedonian national state for the Macedonian people, the Albanians attempted to marginalize the national narrative in the project<sup>316</sup>, emphasizing instead more universal narratives such as protecting human rights and fostering democracy. In the discussion on the choice for a prime minister, for example, the representative of the Albanian party<sup>317</sup> in the assembly insists:

*“[the prime minister] above all needs to be a person who wants the best for this republic [as a] common home [for all of us] independent of nationality, because man is necessarily a man and only incidentally a Macedonian, an Albanian, a Turk, etc.”*<sup>318</sup>

On a different occasion, defending the teaching of Albanian language in schools in the Western parts of the republic, Murati denounces the Macedonian claim that ‘in Macedonian land Albanian language cannot be taught’<sup>319</sup>:

*“We all want democracy but as long as we think ‘democracy for me but not for you’, there will be animosity between us. I would not like to say [...] that it was being worked here for a quasi-democracy, I do not like to think we would get to that.”*<sup>320</sup>

Appealing to commonality between different ethnicities and discarding national differences as incidental, Murati clearly attempts to challenge the hegemony of nationalist discourse and give the project of statehood an alternative meaning, upheld by individualism and equality. Replacing nationality as the central signifier of statehood with democracy (‘we all want [it]’), and suggesting that it might be under threat (the urgency highlighted by his double refusal to believe this might be the case), he discursively re-arranges political priorities, suggesting an alternative framework for statehood.

<sup>316</sup> The ‘national key’ as Faik Abdi (Roma), calls it at 4<sup>th</sup> plenary session 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 162.

<sup>317</sup> Dzheladin Murati, a key figure in the Party for Democratic Prosperity.

<sup>318</sup> Dzheladin Murati speaking at the 7<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 1991, 208.

<sup>319</sup> Dzheladin Murati speaking at the 4<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 171.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

The Albanian context added an important tenet to Macedonian state identity at the time. Even though the political project of independent Macedonian statehood demanded a national state for the Macedonian people, it could not acquire the legitimacy it needed unless it articulated a broader criterion for self-identification than nationality. Hence, the consensual formula acknowledging the 'equal and sustainable'<sup>321</sup> participation of other 'nationalities'. This made narratives of Macedonian post-socialist national identity much more inclusive, as compared to Bulgaria. At the same time, however, it institutionalized 'otherness', upholding a state identity destabilized by mutually nourished domestic nationalisms. The internal instability of this identity construct made it more vulnerable to external attacks.

### *The Balkan Context*

Macedonia staked its claim for independent statehood in a geopolitical environment that was not entirely benevolent. Surrounded by Bulgaria and Greece, which both had certain ideas of 'Macedonian-ness', Macedonia had always had to defend its identity against external encroachment. To Bulgaria, Macedonia was an integral element of the Bulgarian narrative of national pride, sacrifice and loss. Laying claims on the entire region of geographical Macedonia (Pirin, Vardar and Aegean) as old Bulgarian lands, Bulgaria had not come to terms with Macedonian statehood. To Greece, Macedonia was a central locus of Greek narratives of political superiority dating back to Antiquity. Symbolically, it was an inseparable part of Greek national identity and as such, Macedonian independent statehood could not be treated as anything but an aberration. The fact that both states had considerable parts of geographical Macedonia under their sovereignty was interpreted by them as evidence supporting their claims and justification for their 'special' positions towards the Macedonian republic. Appealing to past commonality, Bulgaria fluctuated between the paternalistic tone of an older brother protective of an inexperienced youth and the absolute negation of Macedonia's distinctive identity. Both ends of the spectre denied Macedonia a position of equality in the world of sovereign states and thus contradicted the very nature of the most crucial political project for Macedonia –

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<sup>321</sup> From the Preamble of the 1991 Macedonian Constitution at <http://www.dzr.gov.mk/Uploads/ustavrm.pdf>.

independent statehood. Greece, in turn, insisted on an essential right over anything 'Macedonian' and categorically refused to acknowledge unauthorized use of the name 'Macedonia' and of key elements from the insignia of the Macedonian state. From a position of recognized international authority, this refusal denied Macedonia the freedom to access the most stable of all signifiers of 'Macedonian-ness', the name.

These 'special' positions differed significantly from each other, but in their encroachment over the discursive space of Macedonian identity they both constituted serious threats to its stability. Indeed, the domestic perception of the two neighbours was that of hostility. The future prime minister of independent Macedonia confirms:

*"Bulgaria and Greece [...] simply do not acknowledge that there is a Macedonian people."*<sup>322</sup>

Debating relations with the rest of the Balkan states, another MP insists:

*"I cannot begin to understand the logic of opening a conversation about our decision [on the future in Yugoslavia] with the states that do not recognize us, which are Bulgaria [and] Greece."*<sup>323</sup>

Even the notoriously pro-Balkan Ljubco Georgievski, another future prime minister, resignedly concludes:

*"Unfortunately, we cannot choose our neighbours, and our neighbours are [...] Greece and Bulgaria. We are in the middle."*<sup>324</sup>

The notions of surrounded-ness and non-acceptance structure the perception of hostility emanating from Macedonia's neighbours and constitute these neighbours as a threat. This is evident in the widely vocalized concern in Macedonia for the Macedonian minorities on the territory of these neighbours. The newly elected president Gligorov lists this concern among the most pressing issues before the new state:

<sup>322</sup> Branko Crvenkovski, Macedonia's second prime minister, speaking at 6<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1991, 27.

<sup>323</sup> Albania is also listed here in the full quote. Vladimir Golubovski, 7<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 1991, 155.

<sup>324</sup> Albania and Serbia in the original quote. Lubcho Georgievski, 7<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 1991, 156.

*“In the first place, [vital] questions [for us] are the sovereignty of the Macedonian state [and] the fate of the Macedonian people in neighbouring countries [as well relations with our diaspora].”<sup>325</sup>*

Almost an entire plenary session is dedicated to discussing the possible benefits of using the results of a US State Department report on minorities in the Balkans, particularly its conclusions on the Macedonians in Aegean Macedonia and in Pirin Macedonia and Bulgaria in general.<sup>326</sup> The concern is not only getting their minority status and rights recognized. It goes beyond that, “to enable [...] the love of the fatherland of the Macedonians [...] in neighbouring lands”.<sup>327</sup>

This excessive preoccupation with the well-being of Macedonian minorities in the surrounding states, however, further exacerbates neighbours’ reservations over a sovereign Macedonia, serving as a catalyst of their anti-Macedonian sentiments. Both in domestic and in international contexts, the Bulgarian and Greek governments did not hesitate to make these sentiments known<sup>328</sup>, provoking as a response the mobilization of Macedonian identity politics and the securitization of Macedonian national identity. Complemented by complex Macedonian relations with Serbia as the former sovereign and Albania, this regional context stimulated the rise of defensive Macedonian nationalism and to a large extent affected the type of national identity it upheld.

Thus, not unlike in Bulgaria, the first years of post-communism in Macedonia were structured by the discursive context of hegemonic nationalism. Understanding this context and its specificities in the two studied cases is the starting point of analyzing the meanings upheld by national identity narratives and the language used to articulate them.

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<sup>325</sup> Kiro Gligorov, 5<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 18.

<sup>326</sup> Verbatim report from 7<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 1991.

<sup>327</sup> Kiro Gligorov, 5<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 25.

<sup>328</sup> The prime ministers of the two states Popov and Mitsotakis had made frequent statements in this sense.

### ***The Hegemony of Nationalism as Discursive Context***

As argued in the first part of the dissertation, the discourse of nationalism is the implicit discursive background of modern statehood, which makes it perpetually relevant to the political. Both major developments in post-war Europe – the institutionalization of communism in the East and the project of European integration in the West – attempted to transcend its discursive boundaries, although in very different ways. This temporarily marginalized some of nationalism's interpretations of state identity. The breakup of communism in Eastern Europe restored their political relevance, particularly in view of the East's initial isolation from the integration processes in the West. The renewed search for credible collective identity in post-communist Bulgaria and Macedonia was thus structured by the discursive hegemony of nationalism. National identity narratives of the early transition in the two states are highly conflictual, upholding a closed community strongly dependent upon past antagonisms. The following chapter traces some of their most salient interpretations.

As explained in the research design section in Chapter IV, the analysis identifies six central narratives (or groups of narratives) of identity, identifiable in both states, and traces their transformations in the two studied states. Three of them focus predominantly on discursively positioning the national subject. They are analysed at the beginning and towards the end of transition and variations in them are compared and contrasted in Chapter VI and in Chapter VIII. The other three central identity narratives, concerned mostly with discursively positioning the constitutive national 'Other(s)', are analysed in Chapter VII. They outline axes of conflictuality between the two studied states and are traced within the chronological periods of their greatest salience. Identifying variations of these narratives with the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse within and across the studied units is the main task of the following three chapters.

## CHAPTER VI

### IDENTITY NARRATIVES IN BULGARIA AND MACEDONIA BEFORE EUROPEANIZATION

Having laid out the discursive context of hegemonic nationalism as structuring the narration of identity in both Bulgaria and Macedonia towards the beginning of their democratic transitions, the dissertation proceeds to explore three central national identity narratives determining the discursive position of 'Self' in the two states. It selects salient narratives upheld by traditional identity signifiers identifiable in both states: territory, nationhood, purpose. Tracing their dominant interpretations before Europeanization, the analysis aims to establish the political consequences of identity narration for imagining the community of the state. It also aims to reveal the political consequences of identity narration for perpetuating particular state behaviour. Upholding a closed, exclusive community highly dependent on historical narratives and thus oriented towards the past, the hegemonic discourse of nationalism perpetuates inter-ethnic and inter-national conflictuality.<sup>329</sup> This significantly compromises the credibility of national identity narratives as legitimate source of sovereign power in Europe. But with the gradual empowerment of Europeanization, the political relevance of 'European' signifiers for narrating the national story increases. Having outlined the discursive pattern of national identity before Europeanization in this chapter, the analysis will then follow the discursive modifications introduced in it by the discourse of 'Europe' in chapters VII and VIII.

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<sup>329</sup> The discussion on nationalism in Part I of the dissertation presents this argument in detail.

### ***Bulgarian National Identity Narratives of 'Self' before Europeanization***

The political relevance of national identity narrated within the discourse of nationalism is revealed in the political antagonisms which it perpetuates. Despite its sedimented quality and increased popular appeal, national identity upheld in an antagonistic manner did not enjoy high credibility as a legitimate state identity in the context of post-communism. Against the imperatives of coming to terms with the past and starting anew, the community of the state had to be imagined in a different way. The search for this new identity in Bulgaria began with the beginning of transition, as demonstrated in the preceding chapter. The democratization process and the project of integration in Europe provided a general direction to this search, but the salience of nationalism prevented immediate progress towards it. This section aims to map out the discursive pattern of Bulgarian national identity in this context of increased instability still dominated by the discourse of nationalism. By tracing the dominant interpretations of three central identity signifiers and the narratives articulating their meanings, it attempts to identify the discursive logic of the conflictuality they perpetuated. Focusing on one dimension of the identity articulation dynamics – Bulgarian-Macedonian relations – the analysis explores the political consequences of conflictual interpretations. Assuming that their credibility fails in the non-constructive state behaviour they condition, this section ultimately aims to highlight the discursive omissions of nationalist discourse. It is against these omissions that Europeanization could provide a more credible reading of national identity.

#### *Identity Narratives of Nationhood*

A central signifier of national identity is attached to the discursive element of 'nationhood'. In post-communist Bulgaria its most salient interpretations initially came from the discourse of nationalism, upholding the story of 'national unity' as the highest priority in safeguarding nationhood. Rooted in an historical myth from early medieval times and affirmed by the historical narrative of the liberation movement which led to the establishment of the independent modern Bulgarian state, at a most basic level the story of 'national unity' is understood as the natural bond of 'brotherhood'. Similar to the five



proto-Bulgarian brothers-princes from a popular national myth<sup>330</sup>, unity is based on a blood relation, i.e. it suggests a sort of pre-given commonality that not everybody can share into. Although newcomers have traditionally been welcome in accordance with the proverbial hospitality, they will always remain guests because they do not share the same origin.<sup>331</sup> In the context of threat against the community, the idea of 'national unity' becomes a source of strength against numerous adversaries from within and from without. This is why it acquires a quality of 'highest value'. The period around the negotiated regime change in Bulgaria was a time of utmost uncertainty in ideological, social, political, economic sense. Moreover, it was a time of serious inter-ethnic tension as a legacy of the totalitarian nationalist violence against different ethnicity. In this context of instability the appeal for 'national unity' became increasingly salient.

'Unity of the nation' is the central message of the parliamentary declaration on the national question<sup>332</sup> which officially recognized the responsibility of the totalitarian regime for the nationalist violence of the past in an attempt to appease the protesting crowds throughout the country. Its Article 7 is specifically dedicated to the 'unity of the nation'. Following the declaration, 'unity of the nation' is appealed to endlessly as a formula of consensus and highest good at the Roundtable Talks for brokering the post-communist power agreement. Listing it as one of the basic principles underlying the political system that post-totalitarian Bulgaria needs to establish with the reforms, the then vice-chairman of the 'state council' explains:

*"we are introducing new principles [...] such as democratism, humanism, unity of the nation, separation between executive, legislative and judicial powers."*<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> The fable for Khan Kubrat and his sons, see Milcho Lalkov, *Rulers of Bulgaria* (Sofia: Kibea Publishing, 1995) at [http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/FeaturesEurope/EasternBulgaria\\_Kubrat.htm](http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/FeaturesEurope/EasternBulgaria_Kubrat.htm).

<sup>331</sup> The peaceful accommodation of the Turkish minority population which remained within the borders of the new Bulgarian state after 1878 illustrates this model, see Valeri Stoyanov, *The Turkish Population in Bulgaria between the Poles of Ethnopolitics* (Sofia: LIK, 1998) in Bulgarian.

<sup>332</sup> Televised on 15th Jan 1990, available at <http://anamnesis.info/clio-bg/index.php/vek/3243>.

<sup>333</sup> Vice-chairman of the State Council and chair of the Legislative Committee Vasil Mrichkov, Roundtable Talks 19<sup>th</sup> March 1990 from 3.10pm, verbatim reports, 641.

From the side of the opposition, a representative of the Club of the Repressed<sup>334</sup> also lists national unity among the priority goals of the reforms, when appealing for a particular type of electoral system:

*“this is particularly important [...] in the name of the consensus, in the name of the national unity, in the name of the peaceful transition, etcetera [...]”*<sup>335</sup>

The lack of theoretical precision in the use and the rhetorical inertia of such statements illustrates the formulaic quality which the phrase had acquired by this time.

The acceptance of the idea of ‘national unity’ as a highest value upholds a particular national identity that is not necessarily reconciliatory. By emphasizing unity of the national community at all cost, the political actors in effect deny the members of the community the right to differences which transcend the boundary of the nation. This means that Bulgarian citizens are not expected to have any different national affiliation if they are to be members of the community of the Bulgarian nation. In the case of national minorities the implication is slightly paradoxical. Their right of belonging is recognized in so far as their ‘national consciousness’<sup>336</sup> remains Bulgarian, despite ethnic or religious differences. This is the only reasoning which can preserve a cohesive, unified, monolithic nation, at the same time accepting otherness. But because minorities cannot share the bond of blood from the glorious and tragic past, as the Bulgarian narrative of nationhood has it, they inevitably remain something of an aberration. The emphasis on the need of ‘tolerance’, i.e. acceptance of something one does not necessarily agree with, illustrates this incongruence. The concept of a monolithic nation simply cannot accommodate fully and comfortably the idea of national minorities. It always maintains a fine distinction between ‘ethnic minorities and our people’<sup>337</sup>.

This is evident in the discussions on many of the political reforms undertaken with the breakup of communism, which the Roundtable Talks showcase, as well as in the legislative

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<sup>334</sup> One of the first organizations of activists formed swiftly in the course of the regime change.

<sup>335</sup> Ivan Nevrokopski, *ibid.*, 776.

<sup>336</sup> ‘Национално съзнание’, the use of the term has been well established in Bulgarian academia and politics.

<sup>337</sup> Milan Drenchev, Bulgarian Agricultural Popular Union at the Roundtable Talks, 12<sup>th</sup> Mar 1990 at 15.50h, verbatim report, 536 at.

decisions taken by the Grand National Assembly following the Roundtable. Political parties, for example, are considered to be ‘first and foremost, national organization[s...]<sup>338</sup>, i.e. a clear hierarchy is being established between national and political affiliations in favour of the former. The constitutional provision on political parties, in turn, prohibits ‘the incorporation of political parties along ethnic lines’<sup>339</sup>. This precludes the collective right of political representation of (ethno-)national minorities<sup>340</sup>, which later became particularly controversial in terms of registering parties representing the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. The registration of the organization representing the Turkish ethnic minority<sup>341</sup>, on the other hand, was only allowed after a statutes modification inviting membership from the Bulgarian majority (i.e. formally, it is not representing exclusively the ethnic Turks).<sup>342</sup> The explicit prohibition of political representation of ethno-national minorities at the level of primary law continues the established hierarchy between national and political, placing ethnicity lower down the hierarchy line. This characterizes Bulgarian national identity of the time as highly exclusive, constituting a closed community in which belonging is defined by *jus sanguinis*<sup>343</sup>. Such an exclusive identity increases the degree of conflictuality, because it dramatically narrows the discursive space of the national subjects and constitutes everybody else in terms of threatening ‘otherness’. In view of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, such an identity can be disorienting because it conditions a challenge from within. Historically sedimented narratives of belonging constitute the people of Macedonia as ‘brothers’<sup>344</sup>: they are included in the same narratives which uphold the community of blood. Macedonia’s refusal to participate in these narratives threatens their credibility. This is furthermore challenged by the narrative re-writing of national identity in Macedonia, constituting Bulgaria as the threatening ‘Other’. Thus, the

<sup>338</sup> This argument is used to seek prohibition for financing political parties with funds from abroad, Vasil Mrichkov speaking at the Roundtable Talks, 26<sup>th</sup> Mar 1990 at 9.36, verbatim report, 732.

<sup>339</sup> Art.11, Para.4 of the 1991 Constitution.

<sup>340</sup> On the ambivalence between collective and individual representation rights in Europe, see Miodrag A. Jovanović, ‘Recognizing minority identities through collective rights’, *Human Rights Quarterly* 27 (3), (2005): 625-51.

<sup>341</sup> The Movement for Rights and Freedoms.

<sup>342</sup> Venelin Ganey, ‘History, Politics, and the Constitution: Ethnic Conflict and Constitutional Adjudication in Postcommunist Bulgaria’, *Slavic Review* 63 (1), (2004): 66-89.

<sup>343</sup> Similar conclusion by Victor Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Question* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 19.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 2.

interpretation of one of the central signifiers of Bulgarian national identity – unity of the nation – pre-determines conflictuality in bilateral relations with Macedonia.

### *Identity Narratives of Territory*

Another key signifier of Bulgarian national identity is articulated on the basis of the discursive element of territory. The most salient interpretations of national territory in post-communist Bulgaria uphold the story of 'territorial integrity'. While preserving the territorial integrity of the state logically heads the security and defense policy goals of any state, constituting territorial integrity as a signifier of identity serves a different purpose. Originating in the idea of 'unity' of the Bulgarian nation, in many ways it defined the type of state modern Bulgaria became from its independence to the final decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many states contain territorial entities with various degrees of autonomy within their borders or are part of a federation, while retaining their territorial integrity. For Bulgaria the idea of the inherently integral nature of state territory characterized by an equal degree of sovereignty over all of its territorial regions has been upheld as sacrosanct. Even the remote probability<sup>345</sup> that the Turkish minority might demand autonomy for the southern region which it predominantly populated, was sufficient to generate tensions in the inter-ethnic relations within the state.<sup>346</sup> In their attempts to address the problem in a reconciliatory manner, the government and the democratic opposition discuss an official declaration in which the primary focus is on denying that 'autonomy' had ever come up as a political option. Thus, the leader of the National Union of Students<sup>347</sup> insists that:

*"Their other demand, for autonomy, which has been flared by the chauvinists, needs to be addressed and denied [in the text of the declaration]"*<sup>348</sup>

The speaker of the democratic opposition continues:

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<sup>345</sup> Which held very little relevance to fact at the time, given the lack of organizational power of the minority community.

<sup>346</sup> Valeri Stoyanov, *The Turkish Population in Bulgaria*.

<sup>347</sup> Having actively participated in the civil protests in the capital, the National Union of Students were invited to take part in the Roundtable negotiations as part of the opposition.

<sup>348</sup> Emil Koshlukov, leader of the Student Unions at the Roundtable Talks, plenary session on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1990 from 5.30pm, verbatim report, 562.

*"[...] the declaration [...] needs to confirm that we have discussed the situation and that the issue of autonomy has not been brought up [...] because they say, rumour has it, that their main demand has been for autonomy."*<sup>349</sup>

The attempts to publicly deny even the mention of the idea for autonomy are illustrative of the explosive potential which this idea might have on the internal stability of the state. In a telling allegory ('to invite the wolf [into the sheep pen]'<sup>350</sup>) the prime minister-to-be insists that only the word 'separatism' (and not 'autonomy') be referred to when denying any 'anti-state' demands on behalf of the minority<sup>351</sup>. The allegory suggests that even though it might have been among the claims of the repressed, the demand for autonomy is categorically dismissed as a possible political solution to the inter-ethnic problem. Territorial integrity as a signifier of the national identity of the Bulgarian state is non-negotiable.

This is also evident in the new constitution agreed by the Grand National Assembly the following year. Its preamble refers to the 'irrevocable duty [of the legislators] to guard the national and state integrity of Bulgaria'.<sup>352</sup> Article 2 explicitly prohibits any 'autonomous territorial formations'<sup>353</sup> and designates the territorial integrity of the state as 'inviolable'<sup>354</sup>. Relevant in this context is also an interesting constitutional provision regulating property rights over land. Foreigners are denied the right to acquire ownership over Bulgarian land and if they inherit it, they need to transfer it immediately<sup>355</sup>. Rare in its juridical formulation, this provision is indicative of the degree of salience of the territorial integrity signifier in the construction of the national identity of the state. In the discursive dynamics determining the positions of national 'Self' and 'Other' such salience clearly designates the 'foreign' as a threat.

<sup>349</sup> Georgi Spasov, speaker for the Union of Democratic Forces, at the Roundtable Talks, verbatim reports from the plenary session on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1990 from 5.30pm.

<sup>350</sup> Andrey Lukanov speaks at the Roundtable Talks, verbatim reports from the plenary session on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1990 from 5.30pm.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

<sup>352</sup> Constitution of Bulgaria 1991, Preamble available at <http://www.parliament.bg/en/const>.

<sup>353</sup> Para.1.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, Para.2.

<sup>355</sup> Before the amendment of 2005. (Art.22, Para.1).

Along similar lines, the discursive emphasis on the protection of state borders during the negotiation of the reforms re-enforces the perception of threat, and is another illustration of the closed character of identity upheld through the narratives of 'national unity' and 'territorial integrity'. In the discussion on dismantling the barbed-wire fences along the state borders the minister of the interior alerts to the dangers which such a move induces and the increased number of guards that it implicates.<sup>356</sup> Contrasting the idea with the phenomenon of open borders in Europe, the minister underlines Bulgaria's unpreparedness for open borders ('[lacking prerequisites of] political, economic and social character'<sup>357</sup>), thus increasing the sense of threat. Emphasizing the role of state borders has the effect of discursively solidifying them as a source of protection against foreign threat. Such rhetoric increases the degree of conflictuality of national identity by re-enforcing its closed nature. In view of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, the salience of the territorial integrity narrative produced a field of political tension focused on the border region of Pirin Macedonia (within the territory of Bulgaria). The independence of the Macedonian state and its claims for protecting the Macedonian minority inhabiting this region increased the perception of threat against Bulgarian territorial integrity and considerably strained the bilateral relations. This is illustrated by the recurrence of the issue of minorities in relation to territorial integrity in the inter-state dialogue between the two states.

### *Identity Narratives of National Purpose*

Another key signifier of Bulgarian national identity is identified in articulations of national purpose. Interpreted through the narratives of 'centrality on the Balkans', the meaning of this discursive element is determined by Bulgaria's specific geopolitical position. Encrypted in an almost sacrosanct manner in the national anthem<sup>358</sup>, it is defined by the centrality of the 'proud' Stara Planina<sup>359</sup> and delimited by the 'blue' Danube river to the north, the valley of Thrace 'shining in the sun' to the south, and the 'fiery' Pirin mountain to the

<sup>356</sup> Atanas Semerdzhiev, verbatim reports from the Roundtable Talks on 26<sup>th</sup> Mar 1990 from 9.36am, 732.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 732.

<sup>358</sup> Which demands dutiful respect, as the custom of standing up while the anthem is played suggests.

<sup>359</sup> The transliteration of the Bulgarian name of the Balkan mountain range, 'The Old Mountain' (Bulg.).

west.<sup>360</sup> The mythologization of national geography as one of the instruments of nation-building constructs a primordial attachment to the land which becomes the basis of the claim of sovereignty. Therefore it serves the dual purpose of constituting the community as national and legitimizing its territorial claims. By revolving its geographical space around the physical backbone of the Balkans – the Balkan mountain range – Bulgaria lays a particular claim to the geopolitics of the entire peninsula: its centrality.

“We are the very centre of the Balkans,”<sup>361</sup> declares among other things the Bulgarian president in an interview for the democratic opposition’s leading newspaper. “History has dealt us a key position on the Balkans,”<sup>362</sup> says the vice-president a little earlier. The matter-of-fact quality of these statements and the consensual agreement with which they are met across the political landscape are an indication of the degree of discursive sedimentation of the notion of ‘centrality’. This is important because it has been narratively used as justification for failures in foreign and domestic policy on key political issues. The story of the nation as the victim of conflicting interests of the ‘Great Powers’ on the Balkans, whose intersection Bulgaria ‘tragically’ occupies, has been repeated over and over again, with each unsuccessful political move and each loss of positions.<sup>363</sup> The ‘unjust’ Berlin Treaty of 1878, replacing the ‘just’ San Stefano Treaty which incidentally met all territorial claims of the new Bulgarians state, pushed Bulgaria into decades of dramatic effort to complete its national aspirations: ‘our righteous aspirations have met nothing but misunderstanding and animosity’, one of the leading historiographers of the communist-time Academy of Sciences asserts.<sup>364</sup> This historically documented conclusion<sup>365</sup> is also reproduced in the political space at a highest level:

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<sup>360</sup> Bulgarian national anthem available online at <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/22>.

<sup>361</sup> *Demokratsia* newspaper, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1992, interview with President Zhelyu Zhelev by Maria Vasileva.

<sup>362</sup> Atanas Semerdzhiev speaking at the Roundtable Talks, verbatim reports from 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 1990 from 14.35h, 426.

<sup>363</sup> After a series of wars, participation in which had been motivated by the aspirations for national and territorial unification.

<sup>364</sup> Ilcho Dimitrov in an interview in *Duma* newspaper, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1992, Issue 27.

<sup>365</sup> See the monumental *History of Bulgaria* in 14 Volumes published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1979 (re-printed by GALICO in 1999).

*"[our central geopolitical position] has been a curse for Bulgaria. [...] Bulgaria at the crossroads has always been a victim."*<sup>366</sup>

The discursive victimization of Bulgaria because of its geographical and geopolitical position, projected as something that lies outside the scope of control of the subject (implying innocence), serves the political purpose of transferring the blame for the 'national catastrophes'<sup>367</sup>, which unwise or unfortunate (but otherwise 'righteous') policies have led the state into. Re-opening the 'Macedonian question' with Macedonia's claim for independence and the ambiguities in Bulgaria's position towards it establishes direct discursive links with this historical discussion on dealing with national loss. The fact that the context which determined Bulgaria's reaction to Macedonia's independence was discursively rooted in the traumas of the past to a large extent troubled bilateral relations and impeded a solution to the bilateral issues in line with the political present.

The political relevance of the discourse on victimization in the early 1990s can also be linked to the uncertainty caused by the reforms. Rejecting totalitarianism, Bulgaria struggled to re-define its state identity in an entirely novel international environment. Established stereotypes of hostility – of 'otherness' – naturally resurfaced as points of orientation. However, the context of change, uncertain as it was, brought with it hopes for a new beginning. The fall of totalitarianism promised 'freedom' and opened up the discursive space for new interpretations of the signifier of national purpose. This is what enabled the transformation of the victimization narrative into a story of opportunity.

*"Today, in the world of modern communications, [our geopolitical] position is a great advantage; we should be the biggest of fools if we do not use our natural advantages."*<sup>368</sup>

This interpretation links the idea of centrality to an antithetical discourse implying uniqueness, significance, responsibility. To begin with, centrality begins to be seen as

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<sup>366</sup> Demokratsia newspaper, 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, interview with President Zhelyu Zhelev by Maria Vasileva.

<sup>367</sup> The term 'national catastrophe' is used in Bulgarian historiography to describe the period after the Balkan wars and the period after the First World War, History of Bulgaria, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Volume 8 (Sofia: GALICO, 1999).

<sup>368</sup> Demokratsia newspaper, 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, interview with President Zhelyu Zhelev by Maria Vasileva.



conditioning Bulgaria's special mission as a factor of stability on the Balkans. This idea is being repeated on numerous occasions as the reason and purpose of Bulgarian policy, and is being reinforced by external authoritative recognition which is widely publicised. The American then Secretary of the Air Force is being quoted as assuring the Bulgarian prime minister that '[your] country is the centre of stability on the Balkans'<sup>369</sup>. Positive pieces on Bulgaria from the European press are another way of suggesting Bulgaria's exceptionalism: 'The Little Miracle on the Balkans'<sup>370</sup>. Reversing the political sign of centrality to signify stability is an expression of Bulgaria's search for a new state direction and purpose at the beginning of the period of transition. Positive self-identification at state level is a good basis for political mobilization domestically and for successful negotiation internationally. For Bulgaria's smaller neighbour Macedonia, however, the paternalistic tone of Bulgarian foreign policy did not promise good neighbourly relations, particularly not in view of Bulgarian ambiguities towards Macedonia as a sovereign nation.

Another aspect of the new interpretation of centrality is directly relevant to Bulgaria's (re-) turn to Europe. Being located at the geopolitical crossroads between Europe and Asia, Bulgaria presents itself as the gatekeeper of the borderline. In an international context the chair of the parliamentary committee on foreign policy declares:

*"The Black Sea has two coastal lines, one European, one Asian. Bulgarians are on the European line and do not intend to leave it."*<sup>371</sup>

Such self-positioning is flattering because of the claimed mediatory role between two worlds, which are placed in a decidedly hierarchical order<sup>372</sup>, as suggested by the determination with which the claimed position is being defended ('we do not intend to leave' the European line). This formulation is not new to Bulgarian historiography. It implies 'a special duty and a special responsibility before Europe to help solve the

<sup>369</sup> Donald Rice, US Secretary of the Airforce, Demokratsia newspaper, 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, the quote is a headline (!).

<sup>370</sup> Züddeutsche Zeitung, quoted in Demokratsia newspaper, 22<sup>nd</sup> Apr 1992.

<sup>371</sup> Demokratsia newspaper, 29<sup>th</sup> Apr 1992 quoting Aleksander Yordanov, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy.

<sup>372</sup> As opposed to the dynamics of discursive undecideability in discourse theory, Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*.

problems in the Balkan region,<sup>373</sup> the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explains. Thus not only is Bulgarian claim for Europe being staked, but at the same time this claim is being argumentatively backed. Insisting on a special 'duty and responsibility before Europe' arising for Bulgaria from its alleged gatekeeping position also suggests a special relationship between Bulgaria and Europe. Such self-identification aims to discursively enhance the self-image of the state. In the longer term it is indicative of the future directions of foreign policy strategy. In view of Bulgaria's international position on the Balkans, however, this self-identification imposed certain paternalism which Macedonia found particularly irritating, as the second section of this chapter demonstrates. Within the discursive hegemony of nationalism, the credibility of 'European' stories of 'Self' is still questionable.

### ***Credibility of Bulgarian National Identity Narratives of 'Self' before Europeanization***

Contextually identifying the dominant interpretations of three of its most salient signifiers – national unity, territorial integrity, geopolitical centrality – helps imagine the discursive pattern of Bulgarian national identity from the early post-communist period. It reveals a closed community predominantly oriented towards the past. Self-identification with the community is possible only along the strict lines of nationhood excluding those who cannot partake in the nationhood narrative. Most significantly this category refers to minority communities sharing different national, ethnic, linguistic, or religious backgrounds. Formally accepted in the wider community of the state, they are discursively marginalized and subtly constituted as the internal 'Other(s)'. Their 'otherness' is often transferred by association to the national communities of origin (i.e. Turkey), constituting various external 'Others' in the face of immediate neighbours as a threat. The closed character of Bulgarian national identity determines its high degree of conflictuality.

The orientation towards the past, in its turn, links past antagonisms to the present, making them part of the agenda of everyday politics. This orientation impedes processing and

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<sup>373</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Declaration 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992.

coming to terms with the past<sup>374</sup> because it includes the past in the discursive field in which the identity of the national 'Self' is being articulated. In the context of post-communist transition, such interpretation of identity became increasingly problematic. In view of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, in particular, it immediately brought to the fore the narrative of Bulgarian loss over Macedonia as soon as the issue of establishing bilateral relations at state level was re-opened. The inability to dissociate from this narrative determined the conflictual character of bilateral relations and threatened to compromise Bulgaria's regional standing.

An exclusive national identity oriented towards the past is also particularly vulnerable to the destabilizing effect of closeness in identity. A national identity oriented towards the past is much more difficult to re-formulate because its signifiers are part of historical narratives with higher degree of sedimentation, i.e. they are more difficult to re-tell. This is what conditioned Bulgaria's increased perception of threat as a result of Macedonia's claims over some of the discursive elements upholding Bulgarian national identity. The uncertainty caused by the change of regime in Bulgaria and the struggle to re-define a post-communist national identity for the Bulgarian state had already challenged the stability of these elements. Nationalism's inability to fix their meanings in a credible manner opened up the discursive space to alternative interpretations of identity which promised to reduce insecurity. Europeanization stood out as the major discursive contestant.

### ***Macedonian National Identity Narratives of 'Self' before Europeanization***

In the context of disintegrating from the Yugoslav federation, accommodating the vocal Albanian minority, and struggling for recognition among encroaching neighbours, the Macedonian state sought to project an identity capable of making sense of these changes and reducing the discursive insecurity for its subjects. In the hegemonic presence of nationalism, however, its most salient articulations upheld a highly contentious national identity destabilized from within by unresolved tensions and threatened from without as a

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<sup>374</sup> *Die Vergangenheitsbewältigung* from the German reconciliation tradition.

consequence of its antagonistic projections. This compromised the ability of nationalist discourse to provide a credible reading of Macedonian national identity and asserted the need for alternative, more credible, interpretations.

### *Identity Narratives of Nationhood*

The most salient interpretations of Macedonian nationhood within the hegemony of nationalism struggle with the idea of 'national tolerance'. Their inability to produce a credible narrative of nationhood within the identity construct of the state determined internal instability. On the one hand, the central justification of the project of independence revolved around the vindication of national suffering and the recognition of Macedonians' right of national emancipation. In this sense it upheld statehood as an entirely national project. On the other hand, the historical opportunity for a national state along these lines seemed to have passed because the active political participation of non-Macedonian ethnic minority communities, leading among which the Albanian, prevented the absolute closure of the nationhood narrative in the implementation of the statehood project. Rhetorically entrapped between the dominant story of nationhood and the need for legitimacy, Macedonian statehood had to reach a compromise. This is embodied in its claim to have achieved a just balance between national unity and tolerant inter-ethnic relations. As a signifier of identity this claim upheld a more inclusive national community which, at least declaratively, was not constrained by the limits of monolithic nationhood. This is in contrast to the Bulgarian insistence on an ethnic accommodation model which could be successful only as long as it excluded divergent narratives of nationhood. Macedonia, unlike Bulgaria, allowed the notion of 'nationalities' in its national identity construct, which justified its claim for national tolerance as a signifier of the identity of the Macedonian state.

That this compromise was reached as a matter of urgency is suggested in the conflict between narratives of nationhood and the imperatives for legitimacy throughout 1991. In the period leading up to the referendum<sup>375</sup> a powerful rhetorical line upheld the statehood

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<sup>375</sup> The referendum for the future of Macedonia as an independent state held on 8<sup>th</sup> Sep 1991.

project as a national state *per se*. As a national state, the new entity would naturally represent the collective identity of the majority community, the Macedonian nation:

*“This is why in the national state we can only speak of equality among the citizens in the protection of their rights and freedoms, and we cannot speak of equality between the nation and the national minorities as collectivities.”*<sup>376</sup>

Even though absent from the rhetoric of most leading state actors, this line did appear as a narrative at official state level. It is detectable in the parliamentary debates from the entire period.<sup>377</sup> It is the active political participation of the Albanian minority that first began to question this rhetoric:

*“[...] I will stand for strengthening the national unity but also stabilizing the inter-ethnic relations, promoting these relations and creating a climate of togetherness on the basis of mutual respect, equality, political rights and freedoms and mutual trust.”*<sup>378</sup>

The repeated formula of ‘stabilizing’, ‘promoting’, ‘improving’ the inter-ethnic relations suggests that they are under threat and aims to increase their priority in the first months of the democratic transition, thus leading to their gradual securitization. Categorically placing the inter-ethnic relations on the urgent political agenda of the new Macedonian state, the Albanian political representation calls for a fair and equal treatment of the national minority communities on par with the national majority community. This call attempts to radically re-formulate the entire project of Macedonian statehood, and is, logically, met with fervent opposition on behalf of the majority, insisting on preserving the national character of the signifiers of the state:

*“Nationality [in the constitution] should be specified, Macedonian-ness should be specified, because for the first time in its history the Macedonian people has this chance [to adopt a national constitution].”*<sup>379</sup>

<sup>376</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Plenary session of the Macedonian parliament, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 93.

<sup>377</sup> <http://www.sobranie.mk/ext/sessions.aspx?Id=8440FB6B-A414-4749-9270-5CB070CE4997>.

<sup>378</sup> Dzheladin Murati speaking at the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 75.

<sup>379</sup> Branko Crvenkovski, 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session, 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 25.

This argument is taken even further in its most radical interpretation, suggesting that treating the Albanian minority on par with the Macedonian national majority might lead to the paradox of inverting the hierarchical positions:

*"[...] it seems, if we continue working like this [...], one day we [the Macedonians] will become minority and will have to defend our minority rights."*<sup>380</sup>

These rhetorical formulations catalyzed Albanian discontent with the suggested course of statehood and created an opposing rhetorical current of resentment:

*"The Macedonian nation refers to itself as the sole successor of Macedonia. [...] The Albanians seem to be an unwanted constitutive element in this historical context, only because they insist on being an equal subject in the [project of] statehood."*<sup>381</sup>

Intensifying the minority protest against alleged unjust treatment clashed with the extreme calls for nationalizing the project of statehood, thus threatening to escalate the political atmosphere to unmanageable degrees. This is what predicated the need for an inter-ethnic compromise.

Pointing to the inter-ethnic conflicts that tore Yugoslavia apart, the prime minister-to-be reminded of Macedonia's 'vital interests'<sup>382</sup> which could not be realized unless 'we tried to establish tolerant relations between all of us.'<sup>383</sup> This is the context within which the notion of constituting the state identity as a community of citizenship, not nationhood, gained prominence:

*"[...] in this moment in Europe there is no single state that is constitutionally defined as a national state."*<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Todor Petrov, 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session, 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 54.

<sup>381</sup> Ismet Ramadani speaking at the 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session on 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 45.

<sup>382</sup> Macedonia's second prime minister from the former communist elite, Branko Crvenkovski, lists these as 'completing statehood and acquiring independence and sovereignty', 'protecting territorial integrity', 'entering the European processes of integration', see Branko Crvenkovski, 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 25-26.

<sup>383</sup> Branko Crvenkovski, 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 25.

<sup>384</sup> Crvenkovski, *ibid.*, 28-29.

The speaker of parliament re-enforces the argument in favour of civic, not national, statehood:

*"[...] our Macedonian state [...] contains its national aspect [...] but now we need to move forward to a civic state, because the Macedonian is not simply a member of the nation, but is a member of the nation as a citizen, as an enlightened individual [...]"*<sup>385</sup>

The act of rhetorically positioning the national and civic statehood in a hierarchy in which citizenship is placed higher, as a more 'enlightened' stage of statehood attempts to justify the necessary modification of the Macedonian project of independence. Emphasizing the fact that the national character of the state will not be removed, the speaker demonstrates how a state community organized along civic lines is a community better fitting the political present ('we need to move forward'). What prevails on the side of a civic community is the European perspective ('no other state in Europe'), as will be demonstrated in greater detail below.

The obvious hesitations in taking the project of independence from national to civic statehood are telling of an internal undecideability in Macedonian identity. Even though the particular issue that caused such heated debates (removing the 'national' denominator from Article 1 of the constitution) was resolved in favour of civic identity, the national marker continued to designate the community of the state<sup>386</sup>. In the ambiguous story of national tolerance, this internal tension destabilized Macedonian identity when it needed affirmation and recognition both from within and from without. In this sense it actually increased its conflictuality. Unlike Bulgaria, which fixed its post-communist identity by openly refusing to accommodate divergent narratives of nationhood, Macedonia formally acknowledged domestic otherness. Unable to completely detach from the narrative of nationhood, however, it created a context of domestic antagonism which affected its national and international standing for the following decade.

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<sup>385</sup> Stojan Andov speaking at the 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session on 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 192.

<sup>386</sup> Evident from the Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia of 1991 available at <http://www.dzr.gov.mk/Uploads/ustavrm.pdf>.

### *Identity Narratives of Territory*

In contrast to Bulgaria, national territory was interpreted in Macedonia not as integral and undivisible, but as perpetuating the national story of belonging. The uncertainties surrounding the status of the territory of Macedonia throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the territorial aspirations of neighbouring sovereign states towards it left its population no other stable source of collective self-identification but the name of the land they inhabited. 'Macedonia' as the locus of their struggles for political emancipation from empire began to define the identity of the people contested on all other grounds. Caught between conflicting narratives of nationhood (Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek) but unable to subscribe to either one of them, the people of Macedonia could effectively declare their own identity only through the name of their land. Because of this specific historical role, to a degree replicated later in the federation, the story of territorial belonging is characterized by a great degree of sedimentation as an identity signifier in the narration of Macedonian identity.

*"Macedonia is all we have!"*<sup>387</sup>

*"Our negotiating position starts from the inviolability and entirety of the [political and national subjectivity and] the territorial, the total integrity of Macedonia. We have no right to even discuss these categories with anybody. We will reject a priori any whatsoever pressure or usurpation of the integrity of Macedonia."*<sup>388</sup>

The fact that the land of geographical Macedonia is a primary source of self-identification has an important implication for imagining the community at state level. The borders of the Macedonian state include about one-third of the entire geographical region historically referred to as 'Macedonia'; the rest of it is part of neighbouring states. The implication, therefore, is that of incompleteness, of a severed whole. This is indicated in the numerous references in Macedonian political rhetoric of the time to 'unification'<sup>389</sup> and to the

<sup>387</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 25.

<sup>388</sup> Vladimir Mitkov, Chairman of the State Council of the Republic, 1<sup>st</sup> Plenary session 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 85.

<sup>389</sup> E.g. Vasil Tupurkovski, 1<sup>st</sup> Plenary session 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 92.



‘Macedonian national question’, as well as in the extraordinary concern for the ‘parts of the Macedonian people’ in neighbouring states.

*“Macedonia never has had and never will have territorial aspirations towards its neighbours because territorial aspirations one can have towards something that is not one’s own.”*<sup>390</sup>

Even though such explicit formulations are, indeed, rare, they are indicative of the implicit understanding that ‘Macedonia’ as a self-identification category refers to a larger community. This understanding is one of the key reasons for the high degree of antagonism in the relationships of the Macedonian state with its neighbours. In the Bulgarian-Macedonian relations in particular, it contains an implicit claim over Pirin Macedonia and its people. These relations are further strained by the conflicting claim on Bulgarian side over the exclusively Bulgarian character not only of the Pirin region, but also of the rest of Macedonia.

Another implication of the story of territorial belonging for the pattern of Macedonian national identity is the increased symbolic significance of the name. Being a primary signifier of identity, the name ‘Macedonia’ is non-negotiable. In the context of the name dispute with Greece and the grave consequences which Greek disaffections have had on Macedonia’s economic and political stability in the Balkans<sup>391</sup>, as well as on its progress in the Euro-Atlantic integration, this has become evident. Even beyond the logical line of argumentation on Macedonian side that choosing a name for their state is an exclusive prerogative of state sovereignty, the firm Macedonian position in the dispute displays, beside everything else, Macedonian inability to discuss nothing less than the constitutional name (‘Republic of Macedonia’). Conforming with the formulations acceptable to Greece, such as for example ‘Vardar Macedonia’, would have involved a dramatic reduction of the discursive space delimiting the community, even though it precisely corresponded to the territorial space of the state.

<sup>390</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> plenary session 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 97.

<sup>391</sup> Caused by the Greek embargo. An interesting reference to the topic offers the Greek perspective, Ritsa Panagiotou, ‘FYROM’s Transition: on the Road to Europe?’, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 10(1), (2008): 47-64.

Thus the salience of nationalist interpretations of territory in Macedonia perpetuated a collective identity incongruent with political realities. On the one hand, this re-enforced a domestic perception of being besieged among malevolent neighbours. On the other hand, it projected an external impression of threat towards the political *status quo* in the region. Both dynamics work against the discursive stability and security of collective identity in the various contexts within which it operates. This is evident in the insistence in repeating the adjective 'Macedonian' as a nominal modifier of everything:

*"We, the Macedonians [...] have this constant urge to prove ourselves. We would have been happy if we could mention in every article [of the new Constitution] that it was 'Macedonian'. Macedonian legal system, Macedonian television, Macedonian this, Macedonian that. We are constantly proving ourselves with the subconscious feeling that maybe all this is threatened, it is not recognized, and we need to repeat it and convince our selves that it is so."*<sup>392</sup>

Referring to the reliance on the name 'Macedonian' as re-assurance of one's own identity, the Macedonian president exposes this insecurity and denounces it as unnecessary. In the Balkan context, and particularly in view of Greek non-recognition of the name, he calls for greater self-esteem because '[the name] is [...] beyond any real and comprehensible enquiry, meaning: [our state] is called Macedonia'.<sup>393</sup> This is a discursive attempt to confirm the stability of Macedonian identity and neutralize the perceptions of external threat against it.

In the domestic context, and particularly in view of accommodating the Albanian minority, the excessive preoccupation with the 'Macedonian' denomination of the signifiers of the state strains inter-ethnic relations. It adds unnecessary emphasis on the discussion on Macedonian priority and right over non-Macedonian ethno-national communities by virtue of the 'Macedonian' character of the state.<sup>394</sup> This became evident in the spirited debates in parliament over the exact text of the constitutional preamble referring to the character of the state. The various formulations revolved around the necessity to insist on the

<sup>392</sup> Kiro Gligorov, 25<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 15<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 46.

<sup>393</sup> Gligorov, *ibid.*, 45.

<sup>394</sup> For instance in the debates over the official languages in the state, 25<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 78-83.

‘fatherland’ implication of the national denominator. A powerful discursive line advises against such a formulation:

*“It is normal that [we] crave recognition, and above all, collective recognition. And our insistence to make this constitution a national landmark and give it a national character is understandable. But does this really fulfil our intention? [...] Who do we need to prove to that this is the state in which the Macedonian people accomplishes its statehood, to us or to the others? [...] There’s no state in Europe [...] defined in its constitution as national.”*<sup>395</sup>

It is noted that such insistence on nationality would reveal the instability of Macedonian identity (‘who do we need to prove to’) and, furthermore, would distance Macedonia from its prospective European aspirations. However, the eventual confirmation of the formulation of ‘national state of the Macedonian people’ remained, indicating that the imperative of collective recognition along the lines of ‘Macedonian-ness’ could not be ignored just yet.

Thus, the story of belonging to ‘Macedonia’ as geographical land implies a discrepancy between the politically established limits of the Macedonian discursive space and its imagined ends. Externally, it projected the image of a national community significantly larger than the one demarcated by the territorial borders of the state. This suggested a possible future course of aligning the two contours, left the perception of threat among Macedonia’s neighbours, and re-enforced their already suspicious policies towards the new state. National identity upheld through these narratives pre-positions its own ‘Others’ in a conflictual manner, intensifying the conflictual potential of external relations. Internally, this interpretation increased the significance of the name ‘Macedonia’ as denominator of the nation, marginalizing the members of the communities which could not share in the Macedonian nationhood narrative. In this sense it deteriorated inter-ethnic relations by establishing a contested hierarchy between the majority and the minorities and by intensifying antagonistic discourses of domestic nationalisms. Overall,

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<sup>395</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 27-28.

nationalist interpretations of territory had a destabilizing effect on Macedonian identity by increasing its external and internal insecurity.

### *Identity Narratives of National Purpose*

The perception of insecurity in Macedonian identity has its roots in the interpretation of Macedonian history. The narratives of victimization, suffering and injustice are integral elements of it. Their taken-for-granted quality is evident in the multiple purposes these narratives serve in the discursive space of Macedonian politics. When referring to the insecurity in Macedonian identity, the president mentions in passing the probable explanation:

*"[...] perhaps because of our very difficult history, that has been our fate [...]"*<sup>396</sup>

The suggestion does not question the adjectives ('very difficult'), it only modifies their explanatory value in this precise case ('perhaps'). The resignation with which the difficulties are being accepted ('[it] has been our fate') is indicative of a deeply sedimented narrative of victimization which stands out as an important signifier of Macedonian national identity in the early years of the transition to democracy.

*"[Ours] has been, after all, the most contested people today and throughout history."*<sup>397</sup>

The narrative of victimization can be identified in numerous and varied articulations. They refer to the Macedonian land, to the Macedonian people, to its dignity, to the wrongdoings the Macedonian people has suffered, to its isolation and helplessness. Many major political undertakings in the course of preparing and declaring independence are justified through the narrative of victimization. Electing a president is important for 'finding a place under the sun for this long-suffering patch of land [that is Macedonia], to call our own'<sup>398</sup>. The president, in his turn, sees his elected post as a mission to 'bring Macedonia back its dignity'<sup>399</sup>. Exactly the same appeal is taken up by the newly elected vice-president a week

<sup>396</sup> Kiro Gligorov, 25<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 15<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 46.

<sup>397</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 27-28.

<sup>398</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 6.

<sup>399</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 24.

later: 'Let's bring Macedonia back its dignity!'<sup>400</sup> This is not accidental. The suggestion that Macedonia has been dishonoured apparently has very wide political resonance. It is used for mobilization purposes because it is discursively linked to the notion of vindication and the need for recognition. These ideas underlie the central lines of justification of the grand political project of the time: independent statehood.

The notion of vindication is visible in the appeal to the Macedonian people to renounce the role of a victim and finally take hold of their own destiny. The only way to do this is through independent sovereign statehood because, it has been argued, Macedonia has never actively participated in the organization of matters within the Yugoslav federation. Pointing to the very beginning of Macedonian statehood – the sittings of the popular front<sup>401</sup> which negotiated the foundations of socialist Yugoslavia – a couple of speakers at the first session of the democratic parliament express their fears of 'being caught in the snow':<sup>402</sup> a historical reference to the inability of the Macedonian representatives to get to the sitting because of the deep snow. An even stronger satire is evident in the allegory of Macedonian hesitation in breaking from the past and choosing a new president:

*"[as before], Santa Claus will come and will open our little gift box and will hand us down our president of the republic [...] whom the entire political life of this republic will depend on."*<sup>403</sup>

The political call for active participation of Macedonia in the crafting of its own fate is therefore based on dissociation from the passivity of the federal past and finding an own place 'under the sun'<sup>404</sup>. The formula 'own people on own land'<sup>405</sup> has been repeated as an invocation throughout the year preparing the independence.<sup>406</sup> Independent statehood comes to discursively represent staking out rights over one's own land. Thus denouncing

<sup>400</sup> Ljubco Georgievski, 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1991, 44.

<sup>401</sup> AVNOJ, abbreviation for the Anti-Fascist Popular Council for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (1942, 1943, 1945).

<sup>402</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> plenary session, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, Bogdan Nedelkoski, 65, Todor Petrov, 91.

<sup>403</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> plenary session, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, Todor Petrov, 91.

<sup>404</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 6.

<sup>405</sup> The saying 'свои на своето', which cannot be translated literally, implies the feeling of being among close people in one's own home.

<sup>406</sup> See for instance, 5<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 6, 25<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 33, etc.

the discourse of victimization becomes rhetorically linked to embracing the project of independent statehood. This reveals its constitutive role in the new Macedonian identity.

An identical link exists between the victimization narrative and the call for recognition. The political project of independence is being interpreted as a substantially new stage in Macedonian statehood. This is illustrated in the formulaic references to creating 'a completely autonomous, independent and sovereign state called the Republic of Macedonia'<sup>407</sup>, 'longing for an autonomous and sovereign state'<sup>408</sup>, defending the integral 'legal, political, cultural, national subjectivity' of Macedonia,<sup>409</sup> the need to acquire 'international legal subjectivity'<sup>410</sup>, etc. These widely used formulas suggest that despite the claims of continuity in Macedonian statehood, Macedonia's statesmen are conscious of the categorically new political opportunity for the Macedonian state. Hence, their depiction of the political time as a historical turning point enabling the desired emancipation of the Macedonian nation from the assumed compromise of federative statehood to 'autonomy', 'sovereignty' and 'subjectivity'. It is viewed as the logical culmination of the long struggle of the Macedonian people for 'national liberation'<sup>411</sup>, thus juxtaposing the project of independence to the narrative of victimization as its just end point.

Irrespective of its justness, however, entering this new stage of emancipated statehood cannot be finalized through a unilateral decision. Hence the awareness of the need for and the call for external recognition:

*"[...] the legally schooled should know best that Macedonia [...] does not have internationally recognized continuous legal subjectivity, regrettably. [...] The Basque country also has its own history [...] but it is not a state. And so do the Kurds."*<sup>412</sup>

The rhetorical parallel with the Basques and the Kurds is not legally (or factually) accurate but it emphasizes the argument for the difference between the historical continuity of the

<sup>407</sup> 25th Plenary Session of the Parliament, 9th Nov 1991, 18.

<sup>408</sup> Ismet Ramadani speaking at the 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 45.

<sup>409</sup> The first plenary session.

<sup>410</sup> Stoile Stoikov speaking at the 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 86.

<sup>411</sup> See, for instance, 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 45.

<sup>412</sup> Stoile Stojkov speaking at the 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 186.

Macedonian state, which is not questioned, and the legal continuity, which is. The parallel with the state-less people is also meant to add urgency to the call for recognition, articulated at every significant political juncture. The need to re-write the constitution for instance, the first crucial task after the referendum in favour of independence, is framed in this call for recognition of the republic's international legitimacy.<sup>413</sup> Its link to the renounced victimization narrative, however, perpetuates the discourse of Macedonian nationalism and increases the conflictuality of the collective identity of the new state.

In the domestic context an expression of this increased conflictuality is the re-articulation of the call for recognition of the Macedonian state as a state of the Macedonian nation, already pointed to above. In the regional context too, this narrow interpretation generates more conflictuality because of its unrealistic call for aligning the notions of nation and state.

*"In view of international recognition [...] the Serbs recognize the Macedonian nation, but do not recognize a state. The Bulgarians say they recognize the territory but do not recognize the nation, the Greeks practically deny both, whereas the Albanians [...] remain lukewarm [...] [But] how do we seek international recognition when we ourselves say that we are nobody's state? [...] we ourselves say we do not have a state but ask the neighbours to say 'it's yours'."*<sup>414</sup>

Equating the omission of a direct constitutional reference to the Macedonian nation with relinquishing ownership of the state aims to demonstrate the unacceptability of such a political option and to justify imagining the state as a national state. A state collectivity organized along national lines, however, inevitably excludes major parts of the political body of the state and is thus considered illegitimate. It is not a viable political option and its perpetuation creates a deep divide in the political project of independence, threatening to destabilize the identity of the Macedonian state. In the context of regional hostility such identity is even more vulnerable to encroaching 'otherness', which pre-supposes its higher conflictual potential. Thus the salience of the victimization narrative incorporates the

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<sup>413</sup> See the five sittings of the 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session from 9<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991.

<sup>414</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session from 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 162.

notion of nationhood into the project of independent statehood in such a manner that it challenges its internal credibility and increases its external stability. At the same time, dissociating from the victimization narrative implies a major reformulation of the notion of vindication which is central in the justification of independent statehood. It therefore conditions a discursive contradiction within the political project of statehood which needed to be solved before the new state could uphold a stable and politically legitimate national identity.

### ***Credibility of Macedonian National Identity Narratives of 'Self' before Europeanization***

Macedonian national identity in the early years of democratic transition is revealed as highly divided and controversial. Identifying the dominant interpretations of its most salient signifiers highlighted the declarative national tolerance towards 'otherness' unsupported by political practice, the notion of territorial belonging, dissociation from the victimization narrative through the call for vindication and recognition. Within the discursive context of hegemonic nationalism and its interpretations, Macedonian national identity was torn between projected ambitions and political constraints. It constitutes a state community shaken by instability and insecurity, generated by the undecideability between the narrative of nationhood and the narrative of citizenship as the story of the state. The decades-long ambition of the Macedonian people for a sovereign national state finally arrived at a political opportunity with the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation. However, its political environment prevented the realization of the statehood project within the national frame. The struggle to accommodate the civic imperatives of a non-monolithic nation into the national narrative of statehood propelling the project of independence, produced a series of political compromises whose internalization required time. The collective identity which they attempted to construct and uphold at state level was torn between the traditional orientation towards the past of the nationhood narrative and the typical detachment from the past of the citizenship narrative. The internal tension



generated by narratives of 'Macedonian-ness' destabilized Macedonia's national identity construct in a time when its legitimacy was being put to doubt.

Instability is also generated in the external projections of Macedonian identity. The articulations of more inclusive and open identity narratives were instrumentalized by Macedonia in its bilateral relations in the region. Faced with suspicion on behalf of neighbouring Bulgaria and Greece, Macedonia attempted to affirm its position by demanding from its neighbours similar formally inclusive and open treatment for Macedonian minorities on their territories. These demands were met with distrust and lack of understanding, firstly because Bulgarian and Greek national identity constructs were much more closed and exclusive and their treatment of minorities was organized on completely different terms. But second, and most significant here, Macedonian calls for recognition of minorities were met with lack of understanding because neighbours also refused to acknowledge Macedonia's legitimacy as a sovereign legal subject. In this way the projected image of Macedonian national identity provoked external animosity and had a negative impact on Macedonia's regional standing. This seriously compromised nationalist interpretations of identity. In the discursive vacuum of halted international recognition and the inability to access the discursive resources of Europeanization discourse, immediately available to Bulgaria, it dramatically increased the instability of Macedonian national identity and largely determined the progress of its transition.

### ***Comparability between Bulgarian and Macedonian National Identity Narratives of 'Self'***

Identifying the upholding narratives of Bulgarian and Macedonian national identity and the discursive patterns in which they appear helps understand conflictuality in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, which will be further analyzed in the next chapter. Table 9 helps visualize the way interpretations of national identity relate to each other in the two states. It is notable that while identity signifiers occupy similar discursive positions, the meanings they articulate are very dissimilar. The discursive position of the nation, for instance, is interpreted in two diametrically different ways in the different contexts which the signifier

operates in. The attempt to discursively imagine the nation against the backdrop of ethnic differences is driven by identical ethno-national configurations: dominant national majority, one dominant national minority.<sup>415</sup> The political context in the two states varies, which prompts divergent models of accommodation. In Bulgaria the dominant national minority was not given access to active participation in the political power deal of transition. This prevented its inclusion in the official narrative of the nation and permitted the narrative constitution of the nation in monolithic terms. Hence, the salience of the story of national unity. In Macedonia, in contrast, the dominant national minority was already actively participating in re-negotiating the political contract and this did not allow the majority to codify a monolithic national construct. Instead, the notion of intra-national balance (re-)told a more inclusive national story permissive of national difference. Hence, the signifier of national tolerance.

The different interpretations of the discursive position of the nation have important implications for the conflictual interaction between the two states. Bulgaria, whose notion of a unitary nation included 'Macedonia' as a key historical narrative, had difficulties in coming to terms with the distinctiveness of a separate, non-Bulgarian Macedonian nation precisely because of the salience of the national unity signifier in its national identity construct. Macedonia, whose formulations of a diverse national community included the people born in the non-Macedonian parts of the Macedonian region, insisted on recognition of national minority status and granting national minority rights for these people on the basis of its claim for tolerance. The demands raised towards the immediate external 'Other' from the particular discursive interpretations of the nation turned out to be mutually exclusive. Meeting them required a major reformulation of the meanings attached to the nation and its discursive position. This compromised the political relevance of nationalism and pre-conditioned the need for alternative interpretations.

A very similar dynamics is notable around the discursive position of territory. The salience of the territorial signifier in Bulgaria emphasized integrity, determining the high security context which (even the suggestion of) a special status of any of its territorial regions was

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<sup>415</sup> And a range of smaller minority groups.

being framed in. This included the taboo of recognizing any degree of political or territorial autonomy for minority-populated regions (Pirin Macedonia is discussed in these terms). The historical sedimentation of this signifier is also accountable for the continued political relevance of territories previously included in the Bulgarian national narrative (Vardar Macedonia is one of them). The discursive position of territory is interpreted in a different way in Macedonia. Its centrality increased the salience of the story of belonging since the name of the geographical territory provided an unambiguous source of collective self-identification for a state and nation struggling for recognition. The discrepancy between geographical and legal 'Macedonia' is what is perceived as a threat both to the territorial and discursive spaces of neighbouring states. The most salient interpretations of territory in the two national identity constructs increased the significance of borders, border regions and border populations, emphasizing 'otherness'. In this sense they intensified antagonisms.

The interpretations of the discursive element of national purpose are also conflictual. National purpose in both states was related to the story of victimization. Narratively, however, this story was put to different purposes. In Bulgaria it was inextricably attached to the discursive position of 'Macedonia' in the Bulgarian national story and in this sense it referred to dealing with national loss. It attempted to construct justification for this loss in an optimistic manner, articulating meanings of centrality, uniqueness and special responsibility. These meanings were not necessarily conflictual. But within the discursive hegemony of nationalism, the paternalism in policies towards Macedonia which they implied naturally subverts the notion of equality and antagonized an already fragile relationship. In Macedonia the discourse of victimization referred to the historical impossibility of national statehood. It was linked to the call for vindication of 'Macedonian-ness' and the call for recognition of Macedonian sovereignty justifying the legitimacy of the strategic political project of the time – independence. Again, this interpretation was not necessarily divisive, but in the specific context of rising nationalism it re-enforced the boundaries between national 'Self' and 'Other' and increased their political indispensability. Demanding a position of equality for the subject of the state, which its

external 'Others' refused to acknowledge, it pre-conditioned the antagonistic potential of nationalist interpretation of the signifier of purpose.

State Community	National Identity Narratives of Self		
	Nationhood	Territory	Purpose
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<p>Increased salience of the idea of 'national unity':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-belonging by <i>jus sanguinis</i>;</li> <li>-monolithic nation, no 'national' minorities acceptable;</li> <li>-exclusive membership.</li> </ul>	<p>Territorial integrity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-equal sovereignty over the entirety of national territory;</li> <li>- non-negotiable in terms of minority demands;</li> <li>-prohibition of land ownership for foreigners;</li> <li>-state borders encapsulating the community.</li> </ul>	<p>Centrality on the Balkans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-increased attachment to national geography as an indicator of belonging;</li> <li>-key element is the 'Balkan' mountains, suggesting territorial uniqueness on the peninsula;</li> <li>-victimization narrative based on the idea of centrality on the Balkans;</li> <li>-basis for the claim to 'Europe'.</li> </ul>
<b>Macedonia</b>	<p>National tolerance formally upheld as a compromise between the project of national statehood and the need for legitimacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-increased inter-ethnic tension in stabilizing the compromise;</li> <li>-unsuccessful attempt to articulate national statehood in civic terms</li> </ul>	<p>Territorial belonging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-the narrative of severed national integrity;</li> <li>-the centrality of the narrative of 'unification';</li> <li>-increases symbolic significance of the name 'Macedonia'.</li> </ul>	<p>Victimization narrative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-sovereignty as 'vindication';</li> <li>-active vs passive national role;</li> <li>-centrality of the imperative for recognition;</li> <li>-salience of the narrative of national statehood in its narrow interpretation.</li> </ul>

Table 9. Discursive Patterns of National Identity before Europeanization: Bulgaria and Macedonia.

Positioned within the discourse of nationalism, the narrative signifiers of Bulgarian and Macedonian post-totalitarian national identities span a field of conflicting meanings and interpretations. Investigating their discursive features suggests that without major re-working of the discursive patterns of both national identity constructions, the conflictuality they perpetuated could not be overcome. It also reveals the inability of the discourse of nationalism to read national identity in the two states in a manner compatible with the changing discursive contexts of decommunization and democratization. The inherent lack of credibility of national identity narrated within the discursive limits of nationalism

highlighted the need for imagining the community of the state from a different perspective. The opening up of discursive spaces in both states to the common European processes of cooperation and integration with the launch of the democratic transition quickly formulated this perspective as a (re-) turn to Europe. The following two chapters will explore how embracing the long-term goal of Europeanization in the two states affected imagining the state community and began to transform national identity narratives. By upholding new inclusive interpretations of national identity signifiers, it gradually facilitated reconciliation along the lines of bilateral conflictuality, encouraged detachment from the discourse of nationalism and emphasized the political relevance of Europeanization discourse. Ultimately, it also improved the credibility of national identity narratives read through the discursive lenses of 'Europe'.

## CHAPTER VII

### BILATERAL RELATIONS AND CONFLICTUAL IDENTITY

Exploring and contrasting national identity narratives in Bulgaria and Macedonia prior to Europeanization revealed their incompatibility with the changing discursive contexts of democratization and participation in the common European processes. Interpreted within the discourse of nationalism they determined a high degree of identity-based conflictuality in state behaviour. This is confirmed both in domestic inter-ethnic relations and in the external inter-state relations of the two states. While the previous chapter traced interpretations of three key elements determining the discursive position of 'Self' and conditioning conflictuality domestically, this chapter will follow narratives of identity determining the discursive position of 'Other' and governing external relations. It is divided in three sections, each focusing on one aspect of conflictuality maintained by antagonistic interpretations of national identity. These have been selected on the basis of their political salience in both states: recognizing statehood, solving the language dispute, and granting minority status. The analysis follows the dominant interpretations of the discursive elements upholding these issues. Tracing the evolution of bilateral relations, the analysis uncovers the transformations in the narratives of identity enabling (or disabling) reconciliation. The findings from the investigation suggest that with the progress of Europeanization and the empowerment of its discourse, reconciliation was made possible at most of the conflictual points. This in turn facilitated the integration efforts and re-enforced the new discursive hegemony, marginalizing nationalism's most salient interpretations.

## SECTION I:

## NARRATIVES OF RECOGNIZING STATEHOOD

In order to highlight the elements of this transformation, this section starts by mapping out the specific discursive context which structured bilateral relations prior to Europeanization. It then goes on to trace the identity narratives which governed bilateral behaviour around the issue of recognition of the international subjectivity of the Macedonian state. Linking variations in these narratives to the gradual empowerment of Europeanization discourse and the specificities of this process in the two states, the analysis finally follows post-recognition narratives of identity to see how the discursive position of 'Other' has changed in the hegemonic clash between nationalism and Europeanization.

***The Context of Inequality and Distance***

Around the beginning of the post-communist transition the relationship between Bulgaria and Macedonia was not that of equality. Beside domestic narrative interpretations of national identity which attempted to establish hierarchical positions, inequality was also determined by the specific international legal and political context of the time. Even though Bulgaria emerged from one of the most rigid totalitarian systems as one of the most loyal Soviet satellites, its international legal subjectivity had not been questioned since it formally declared independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1908. So when it began to dismantle its totalitarian structures in 1989 in line with the processes in the rest of Eastern and Central Europe, it launched its transition to democracy as an independent sovereign state. Macedonia, by contrast, started its democratic transition on completely different terms. The Macedonian state had only enjoyed international legal subjectivity as a constituent republic of the Yugoslav socialist federation. Macedonian statehood had not been possible before 1944. Therefore, when the socialist federation began to disintegrate and the Macedonian republic decided to seek independence as a sovereign state in 1991, it had yet to deal with the issue of international recognition. As it turned out, its

international legal subjectivity was challenged on several grounds (leading among which were Greek objections against the state's name), which seriously impeded international recognition. In this context, the post-totalitarian relationship between Bulgaria and Macedonia began as that of an international sovereign and one bidding to be recognized as such. This naturally distorted the discursive power balance of the interaction. In Bulgaria it initiated the paternalistic rhetoric on Macedonia which discursively re-affirmed inequality and visibly obstructed bilateral relations. In Macedonia this gave rise to the rhetoric of defiance which further deteriorated relations and antagonized narratives of 'otherness' in the two states.

The distance between 'Self' and 'Other' was increased by the divergent chains of difference articulating the meaning of identity. Bulgaria had always held a special position on Macedonia because 'Macedonia' had been a central element in the narration of Bulgarian nationhood. In the post-communist period the renewed relevance of the Macedonian question was deliberated on the basis of this special position. 'Macedonia' as a significant point of reference in the 'Self-Other' dialectic had no equivalent in Bulgarian national identity narratives. Macedonia, on the other hand, attempted to rhetorically belittle Bulgaria's significance in Macedonian narratives of nationhood by discursively positioning it in a chain of equivalence with the rest of Macedonia's neighbours. The consistency in this discursive strategy did not allow Bulgaria any special status in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations. This act of distancing along the 'Self-Other' nexus was an effort on behalf of Macedonia to play down the inequality of the relationship. Thus, the discursive constitution of 'Other' in the two states established chains of difference within which no reconciliation with 'otherness' was possible. This in turn re-enforced the perceptions of threat which initiated the dynamics of distancing in the first place.

It is clear from this that the context which framed Bulgarian-Macedonian relations in the early post-totalitarian period was not conducive of amity. Quite to the contrary, it positioned the major outstanding issues between the two states along the lines of conflictuality. As a matter of foreign policy order, the first issue that needed to be addressed in the bilateral relations was international recognition of Macedonia. In view of the regional ambiguities about the name of the newly independent republic, the need to



officially recognize Macedonia's constitutional name appeared simultaneously with the recognition of statehood on the political agenda. Narratives of recognition structured the first post-communist interaction between the two states but, affected by the context of inequality and distance, their interpretation differed significantly.

Bulgaria's and Macedonia's strategic orientation towards participation in the processes of European integration, however, gradually began to empower the discourse of Europeanization. Introducing the national 'Self' to a markedly different 'Self-Other' dialectic by radically broadening the range of commonality between the 'Self' and its constitutive 'Other(s)', Europeanization in effect modified the meanings attached to national identity signifiers. This changed the discursive patterns of the two national identity constructions in significant ways, modified identity narratives and eventually facilitated partial or complete reconciliation along the 'Self'-'Other' nexus in the narratives of recognition. Their 'European' re-narration added credibility to the post-totalitarian reading of national identity by disabling conflictuality. This stabilized the discourse of Europeanization in both states. The following section sets out to explore how this happened.

### ***International Recognition of Macedonia's Name and Statehood***

The Macedonian referendum on the future of the state of September 1991 confirmed popular support for the project of independent statehood and initiated the Macedonian quest for international recognition. Formally marking a new stage in Macedonian statehood, this was obviously a significant moment in the Macedonian national story. However, it also represented a turning point in Bulgarian nationhood narratives. 'Macedonia' as an integral element of the story of national 'Self' in Bulgaria had managed to accommodate Macedonian statehood within the Yugoslav federation with the help of the 'Greater Serbia' plot.<sup>416</sup> Macedonia's dissociation from the Serbian-dominated federation without demonstrating any signs of wanting to return to its 'Bulgarian origins'

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<sup>416</sup> Stefan Troebst, *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien 1967-1982* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1983).

presented Bulgaria with the laborious task of having to re-tell the 'Macedonian story' in order to take account of Macedonia's self-reliance. This required modifying the narrative of national catastrophe and loss, justification for which had comfortably been found in Bulgaria's 'righteous'<sup>417</sup> struggles for Macedonia. The complexity of the undertaking determined Bulgaria's initial unpreparedness to deal with the perspective of Macedonia's independence. This is visible in the reluctance which accompanied the discussion about raising the 'Macedonian question' during the first year of Bulgaria's transition.<sup>418</sup>

With the declaration of Macedonian independence from the disintegrating Yugoslavian federation, the issue of re-defining Bulgaria's position on Macedonia acquired renewed political urgency. It is important to highlight that from the very beginning non-recognition was not a viable political option.<sup>419</sup> The controversies rather revolved around the modalities of recognition: exact timing and manner. The idea that recognition should be postponed was central in the socialists' position, which was unsurprising given their greater attachment to the discourse of nationalism and the key position Macedonia played in its stories<sup>420</sup>. The actors mainly responsible for the decision, however (the prime minister, the president, and the foreign minister), represented the democratic forces and their ambition to demonstrate detachment from nationalist politics became central in the decision-making process. This was evident from their reliance on the report of the European arbitration commission for the status of the former Yugoslav republics,<sup>421</sup> which the government awaited before deciding on the form and the timing of recognition. Linking Bulgaria's reaction to the European stance might have been a sign of insecurity in the face of a potentially conflictual outcome, but it helped frame the entire rhetoric of Bulgaria's position in the discourse of 'European-ness':

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<sup>417</sup> Ilcho Dimitrov, interview in Duma newspaper, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1991, Issue 27.

<sup>418</sup> See verbatim reports from the roundtable talks and verbatim reports from the Grand National Assembly, in the context of the ethnic minority tensions and the status of the claimed Macedonian minority in Pirin Macedonia.

<sup>419</sup> No mention of that political option in official positions.

<sup>420</sup> Verbatim report of the reactions in parliament 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, also Demokratsia newspaper, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992 'The Socialists did not Welcome the Recognition'.

<sup>421</sup> The Arbitration Commission of the Peace Conference on the former Yugoslavia headed by Robert Badinter.

*"Bulgaria appreciates the European Community member-states' unity of action on the crisis in Yugoslavia [...], [Bulgaria] accepts and supports [...] Brussels' approach of equality [...], we also entirely share the recognition criteria [listed in the EC's declaration] [which is why] we will soon recognize Macedonia's independence [...]"*<sup>422</sup>.

This was declared several days before recognition. On the day when the prime minister announced in parliament that the government had reached the decision to recognize Macedonia, he insisted that *"this act expressed our willingness to preserve peace and security on the Balkans and in Europe"*.<sup>423</sup> The chair of the parliamentary committee on foreign policy also confirmed that the government's decision is congruent with the European arbitration committee's report on the legal basis for independence and *"secures [Eastern European states' place] in the common European processes."*<sup>424</sup> In his televised address to the nation on the evening of the decision, the president declared:

*"the decision [to recognize Macedonia] is another confirmation of Bulgaria's unswerving pursuit [...] of facilitating the actual unification of Europe [in line with] the aims of the common European policies of today."*<sup>425</sup>

A couple of days later the Ministry of Foreign Affairs publicized a declaration, again referring to Bulgaria's 'special duty and responsibility before Europe'<sup>426</sup>:

*"Democratic Bulgaria seeks to sustainably implement European policies on the Balkans and will coordinate its decisions with the common positive processes on the continent, headed by the European Community."*<sup>427</sup>

The decision to recognize Macedonia's independence is Bulgaria's first significant foreign policy act in the post-communist period. Following a year of relative international self-isolation as a result of the intense domestic negotiations on the regime-change and the

<sup>422</sup> Message from the President Zhelyu Zhelev to the President Kiro Gligorov from 11<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>423</sup> Filip Dimitrov, 28<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, 45.

<sup>424</sup> Alexander Yordanov, 28<sup>th</sup> plenary session, 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, 76.

<sup>425</sup> Nation's address by the president from 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, BTA, Courier Service.

<sup>426</sup> Declaration of the MFA, 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>427</sup> Reprinted in Demokratsia newspaper of 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992.

new constitutional order, Bulgaria sought to re-claim its international presence and, more significantly, position itself in the realm of 'Europe'. Thus the rhetoric of 'European-ness' surrounding the recognition of Macedonia is in effect a call for European recognition of Bulgaria and the first Bulgarian identity claim for 'European-ness' voiced in the international space after the breakup of communism. In this sense non-recognition would have represented international silence and it would have deprived the new democracy of a 'European' voice. In terms of identity politics, this is what explains the fact that it had not been considered as a political option.

Another key reason for Bulgaria's affirmative position on Macedonian independence has to do with the central place of the 'Macedonian' element in the Bulgarian nationhood narrative. In it 'Macedonian' to a large extent represents part of what is thought of as 'Bulgarian'. Discursive illustration of this is the systematic reference to the Macedonian people as 'brothers'<sup>428</sup> or 'Macedonian brothers'<sup>429</sup>. This suggests that the relationship is seen as one of 'blood', i.e. Macedonians are made part of the Bulgarian national community constituted along these lines. Moments of rhetorical emotion take this suggestion even further:

*"We are witnessing a moment which takes us back down the lane of history and simultaneously opens for us a door to the future. [...] Today Bulgaria is making a fateful step. It is making a step [...] towards our brothers Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia. [applause on behalf of the majority, acclamations 'Bravo!' – stenographer's note]"*<sup>430</sup>

The emotional approbation with which referral to the Macedonian people as 'Bulgarian brothers' is met in parliament (at that coming from a position of responsibility in foreign policy) is indicative of the implied meaning of the 'brotherhood' narrative. It is not surprising then that in its relationship with Macedonia Bulgaria seeks a special position.

<sup>428</sup> While the rest of the former Yugoslav republics are referred to, in contrast, as 'our friends in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina', see Alexander Yordanov at the 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992 plenary session of Bulgarian parliament, 77.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>430</sup> Alexander Yordanov at the 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992 plenary session of Bulgarian parliament, 80 (underlining – the author).

Postponing recognition until the international reaction had crystallized would not have given it such. The only chance of obtaining a special position was deemed to be recognizing first. Indeed, the Bulgarian government took the decision for recognition on the day following the EC declaration on the juridical validity of Macedonia's claim for independence,<sup>431</sup> before any other state had reacted. This swift action should be interpreted not only in light of good neighbourly relations ('important step towards even closer cooperation with all of our neighbours'<sup>432</sup>), even though this might have been true in the case of recognizing Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It, more than anything, is meant to articulate Bulgaria's position as that of Macedonia's special protector and defender.

*"It is well known that Bulgaria is in favour of a free and independent Macedonia, which will finally be fended against the territorial aspirations of its neighbours. [...] Bulgaria does not have and has not had any other wishes for Macedonia but to see its population free and capable of deciding its own fate."*<sup>433</sup>

Obviously, the Bulgarian president does not include Bulgaria in the number of the neighbours threatening Macedonian territory. Quite to the contrary, he presents Bulgaria as the benevolent patron ('wishes to see') of the needing protection Macedonia ('be fended against'). The implicit notion of 'patronage' is confirmed by the suggestion that Macedonia is *not* 'free and capable of deciding its own fate' yet because this is Bulgaria's wish for Macedonia's past and present (the present perfect and simple tense respectively of the verb 'have'). This notion in effect re-enforces the idea of an asymmetric relationship. Another significant discursive element in the president's message for the Macedonian president is the avoidance of the term 'Macedonian people': the formulation 'Macedonia's population' is used instead. The omission of the national denominator 'Macedonian' against the background of the president's declarations from the summer of the previous year<sup>434</sup> is indicative of the reasons for Bulgaria's claimed patronage over Macedonia: it is

<sup>431</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, respectively.

<sup>432</sup> Nation's address of the president from 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>433</sup> Message from the President Zhelyu Zhelev to the President Kiro Gligorov from 11<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992.

<sup>434</sup> That even though Bulgaria will recognize the Macedonian state, it will never recognize the Macedonian nation.

thought of as 'Bulgarian'<sup>435</sup>. This position is an adaptation of the Bulgarian narrative of 'Macedonia' to the new political situation. It offers the opportunity of re-affirming the hierarchy of the relationship in a legitimate manner, while seeking to preserve Bulgaria's special status in it. It is also in concordance with Bulgaria's ambition to represent itself as a key stability factor on the Balkans<sup>436</sup>. This is another way in which the swift recognition of Macedonia upholds a particular vision of Bulgarian national identity which is not necessarily 'Europeanized'.

This vision of Bulgarian identity is also not particularly compatible with Macedonia's vision of Bulgarian identity, nor is it with Macedonia's vision of Macedonian identity. Its articulation allows taken-for-granted references in the Bulgarian public space to the 'so called Macedonian nation' and the 'Bulgarian roots' of Macedonia<sup>437</sup>. It permits Bulgaria's foreign minister to publicly announce that he will postpone establishing diplomatic relations with Macedonia 'until Macedonia's attitudes towards the issues of giving up territorial aspirations and the non-existence of minorities in neighbouring countries crystallize.'<sup>438</sup> This rhetoric helps Macedonia constitute Bulgaria in terms of malevolent 'otherness'. This is reflected in the regular use in Macedonia of the pejorative denominator 'bugarashi'<sup>439</sup> as the ultimate label of national betrayal in Macedonian political discourse. Systemically used against the oppositional party VMRO-DPMNE<sup>440</sup> because of its pro-Bulgarian leadership<sup>441</sup> for example, the label 'bugarashi' is meant to discredit the party's political standing, calling it on numerous occasions to re-declare its Macedonian loyalty.<sup>442</sup> Another way in which Macedonian visions of Bulgaria are incompatible with Bulgaria's claimed patronage has to do with the portrayal of Bulgaria as Macedonian occupier.

<sup>435</sup> Ilcho Dimitrov calls the people of Macedonia 'Macedonian Bulgarians' in an interview for Duma newspaper, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1992.

<sup>436</sup> 'Expresses Bulgaria's aspiration to be a stabilizing factor on the Balkans': from Zhelev's address to the nation 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, 'The Bulgarian Government believes that its position will contribute to the stability of the Balkans as part of the new Europe': declaration of the MFA from 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, etc.

<sup>437</sup> See, for instance, Velizar Enchev from the newspaper Otechestven vestnik reporting on Skopje's reactions to Bulgarian recognition 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992.

<sup>438</sup> Stoyan Ganev in an interview for Demokratsia newspaper of 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 1992.

<sup>439</sup> A pejorative form of the national denominator 'Bulgarians' in the Macedonian language.

<sup>440</sup> The abbreviation from the transliteration in Macedonian and Bulgarian of the name of the party Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, representing the democratic right.

<sup>441</sup> Ljubco Georgievski at the time.

<sup>442</sup> Ljubco Georgievski, *Facing Truth: Essays, Interviews, Articles* (Sofia: Balkani, 2007).

Rooted in the notion of belonging to the land of Macedonia, a key signifier of Macedonian identity as noted earlier, it assumes that important parts of Macedonia are 'occupied' by Bulgaria and the fate of the Macedonian people living in those parts is put to danger. Suggesting inherent malevolence and 'otherness', this interpretation of Bulgaria is not permissive of any approximation between the two national identity images.

In the context of this general negative attitude towards Bulgaria, which had already been built up during the period of preparation of independence, Macedonia's reaction to Bulgarian recognition is unsurprisingly reserved. Cautious of the hierarchy which Bulgaria's patronage attempts to re-enforce, Macedonian public discourse even airs the idea that Bulgarian recognition is undesirable since it would improve Bulgaria's public standing in Macedonia.<sup>443</sup> This accompanies the realisation that international recognition is the inevitable result of Macedonian independent and autonomous policies pursued so far,<sup>444</sup> and not subject to the fortuitous positions of the neighbours. In this context, the emphasis is put not on Bulgaria's public declarations of support but on the inherent flaws in Bulgaria's official position. The Macedonian President confirms:

*"[...] we are particularly painfully experiencing the attitudes of those of our neighbours who, instead of helping us because we are the last nation on the Balkans to achieve its independence and international recognition, are contesting either the name of our state or the name of our nation."*<sup>445</sup>

Drawing from the popular repertoire of the victimization rhetoric to construct justification for support ('instead of helping us'), the president unambiguously identifies the enemies without naming them: the name is contested by Greece and the nationhood by Bulgaria. Their malevolence is implied ('we are painfully experiencing [their] attitudes') but at the same time belittled:

<sup>443</sup> Nova Makedonija newspaper, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992.

<sup>444</sup> Kiro Gligorov, 31<sup>st</sup> plenary session, 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, 7-8 ('sooner or later we shall be independent').

<sup>445</sup> Kiro Gligorov, 31<sup>st</sup> plenary session, 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, 9.

*"We have understanding for these of our neighbours and for their problems, or if you wish, delusions, we think of them [...] without rancour [...], [we wanted to show them] our good will [...]"*<sup>446</sup>

The dignified acquiescence which the neighbour's 'delusional' animosity is met with attempts to reverse the hierarchy of the relationship by changing its organizing criterion from power to morality: on the moral scales Macedonia should be the suggested stronger side. This discursive move is repeated not only domestically. Immediately after Bulgaria's official recognition of Macedonian independence, the Macedonian president gives a press conference in Skopje, in which he declares, among other things that:

*"Macedonia welcomes Bulgaria's recognition but is disinterested in its historical prejudices which are its domestic problem and not a topic of inter-state dialogue."*<sup>447</sup>

The same acquiescence for Bulgaria's domestic 'problems' aims to confirm Macedonia's moral superiority and reverse the hierarchy of power. The formulation of equality used to characterize the relationship ('inter-state dialogue') re-enforces this effect.

Another discursive strategy which aims to diminish the possible significance of Bulgaria's swift recognition of Macedonia attempts to establish a chain of equivalence between Macedonia's allegedly malevolent neighbours. This is already visible in the texts cited above: they do not single out the responsible malevolent subjects but put them under a common denominator, 'our neighbours'. Even more explicit illustration of this strategy can be found in the leading media:

*"As we can see, Bulgaria [...] intends to put conditions [on establishing diplomatic relations], following the example of Greece. Seeking to push Macedonia into relinquishing its national minorities in the neighbouring states, if it gets to that, will uncover the whole game around the supposedly principled, historical, non-strings-attached recognition of Macedonia's independence on behalf of Bulgaria. [...] This*

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>447</sup> Press Conference in Skopje by Kiro Gligorov, 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, reported by BTA.



*all demonstrates that Bulgaria's position approximates Greece's position on Macedonia, which Bulgaria had initially denounced as absurd."*<sup>448</sup>

Equating Bulgaria with Greece and suggesting that its foreign policy act contains conditions unacceptable to Macedonia ('to relinquish its national minorities') discursively minimizes the significance of the fact that Bulgaria was the first state to recognize Macedonian statehood. Furthermore, equating Bulgaria with Greece implies an equal degree of negativity, even though Greece's refusal to recognize Macedonia under its constitutional name had far greater negative consequences than Bulgaria's difficulties in assimilating the idea of a Macedonian nation ever could have had, because of Greece's Euro-Atlantic standing at the time.

Overall, it is obvious that the special status sought by Bulgaria is not accepted by Macedonia, despite the declarative support in the swift Bulgarian recognition. Furthermore, in the discursive space upholding Macedonian national identity, it is seen as a latent threat and is resisted – despite the awareness that it could protract Macedonia's international isolation. Viewed in light of the identity construction dynamics producing conflictual narratives of 'Self' and 'Other', this outcome is not unusual. Bulgaria is struggling with accommodating the new Macedonian status in its own historical narrative of nationhood one of whose central plots revolves around Macedonia. Attempting to preserve the special status of the relationship, Bulgaria re-enforces a hierarchy of inequality in the relationship between the two states which is unacceptable to Macedonia. This hierarchy is the only discursive space within which the key signifiers of Bulgarian narratives of 'Self' continue to articulate un-modified meanings. From protecting the territorial integrity of the state against possible threat, through preserving the unity of the nation against division, to promoting Bulgaria's role as a central factor of stability on the Balkans and in Europe, Bulgaria's position towards Macedonia around the time of the declaration of independence is determined by a particular (nationalist) vision of Bulgarian national identity. Macedonia, too, behaves in accordance with the salient nationalist interpretations of identity, articulated domestically. Its call for recognition and for

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<sup>448</sup> From the commentary of an interview by the Bulgarian foreign minister Stoyan Ganev in Nova Makedonija newspaper, 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1992.

vindication of the long-suffering Macedonian people cannot accommodate patronizing attitudes because for Macedonia they represent the renounced past. The salience of the signifier of territorial belonging does not permit abandoning the aspiration for a close relationship with the Macedonian territories under foreign sovereignty. Its notion of national tolerance demands the same for Macedonia's claimed minorities abroad. Within the discourse of nationalism, the community of the state is imagined through mutually exclusive or highly conflictual meanings. Against their hegemony, even the signifiers of 'Europe' which had already begun to appear in national discursive spaces, were interpreted in an antagonistic manner. This disabled any rapprochement along the relationship between 'Self' and 'Other', as visible from the underlying animosities feeding back into the domestic discursive spaces.

### ***Re-enforcing Domestic Antagonisms in the Context of Nationalism***

The visible political presence of the former communists in Bulgaria is what mostly affected the way recognition was interpreted domestically. Recognition was constructed as a threat to Bulgaria's national security and international standing. Picking up on the indecisiveness in the government's foreign policy between declarative support and national interest considerations, the socialists point to the most intractable issues in the bilateral relations to interpret them as threatening central signifiers of national identity. Recognition of the Macedonian state is thus rhetorically linked to the imperative of recognizing the Macedonian nation and national minority, a prospect which Bulgarian national identity narratives were unable to accommodate at that stage because of the salience of the national unity signifier. The possibility of demanding autonomy for the Pirin Macedonia region, which the socialists associated with recognizing Macedonian nationhood, threatens, on the other hand, the interpretation of integrity and inviolability of the territory of the state.

*"[O]ur recognition of Macedonia could bring Bulgaria to the verge of territorial and national separatism. Embracing European standards on human rights and minorities [...] could be utilized to inspire (cultural, political and territorial)*

*autonomy in Pirin Macedonia [and its] consequent annexation [...] by the Republic of Macedonia. Under the principle of the domino effect such aspirations might rise among the Turkish minority and lead to reciprocal actions on behalf of Turkey.”*<sup>449</sup>

The reference to embracing European standards and their potential negative consequences is of key significance here. Bulgaria's presumed 'European' behaviour is articulated as consequential because of its incorrect interpretation by the reciprocant, also implying inferiority. Such rhetoric is potentially dangerous because it suggests the irrelevance of European standards to the bilateral relations and offers absolution for this. By sounding the familiar 'Turkish alarm' the urgency of the situation is significantly increased because of the still too recent inter-ethnic tensions in Bulgarian society.

Another discursive line adopted by the socialists emphasizes that recognition, even though necessary, has been too hasty and untimely, and promises international isolation as a consequence of unwise foreign policy. It places the issue in the realm of 'high politics' (foreign policy, security policy, defence) which politicizes recognition in an urgent manner. This is significant also because it suggests a threat to another key signifier of Bulgarian narratives of 'Self', the aspiration to be a stability factors on the Balkans:

*“The length of the period in which Bulgaria remains the first and the only state to have recognized Macedonia (not counting the ‘recognition’ by the illegitimate North Cyprus Republic [...]) enormously increases the risk potential for our national security [...]. [Our] looming isolation on the Balkans threatens [...] to largely restrict our foreign policy manoeuvrability. [...] A hostile constellation is being created which leaves Bulgaria [and Macedonia] with a single open door – towards the Bosphorus.”*<sup>450</sup>

Raising again the prospect of dependence upon Turkey, Bulgaria's most significant historical antagonist, places Bulgaria's support for Macedonia in the context of short-

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<sup>449</sup> Prof. Anton Parvanov, 'Bulgaria, the Balkan Syndrome 1913, and the Macedonian Rubicon' in Duma newspaper of 5<sup>th</sup> Feb 1992.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*

sightedness and treats it as a foreign policy lapsus.<sup>451</sup> The threat with international isolation, when the entire behaviour of Bulgaria begins to be focused on the search for assertion and visibility on the international scene and a 'return to Europe', implies a negative evaluation of the act of recognition and warns against further support. In this sense Greek disaffection is particularly concerning because of Greece's position as an immediate neighbour situated within the European political space. The socialists do not miss the opportunity to emphasize this, quoting the Greek foreign minister as saying:

*"Even for the future to come [the hasty recognition of Macedonia] will be an obstacle for Sofia's European orientation. [...] [This] misguided [foreign policy move] annihilated the trust [between Greece and Bulgaria]."*<sup>452</sup>

Even though it is voiced by the political representatives of Bulgaria's past, this interpretative line becomes increasingly salient because it links popular rhetorical imperatives of the past to Bulgaria's ambition for the future. It demonstrates that the attempt to preserve the special status in the relationship with Macedonia has jeopardized the state's Balkan position and European future. The socialists instrumentalize this tension between past and present in the act of recognition for the purposes of gaining political leverage. This suggests that while operating within the hegemonic discourse of nationalism, even the 'Europe' signifiers are being harnessed to serve its purposes.

Similar entanglement in politics dictated by attachments to the past can be observed in Macedonia. Upheld by nationalist interpretations, Macedonian identity narratives of 'Self' were unable to accommodate rapprochement with Bulgaria, despite the presumably amicable act of recognition. If taken up, Bulgaria's declarative support could mean breaking Macedonia's international isolation by establishing the first diplomatic relations. But, at the same time, too close political proximity with Bulgaria threatened the credibility of the narratives upholding Macedonia's national identity discourse. Having just shed the patronage of Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia, Macedonia could not oblige its other big

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<sup>451</sup> This line of analysis is maintained in other key pieces as well. The established historian and academic Prof. Ilcho Dimitrov also judges the recognition as a blunder of haste, see Prof. Ilcho Dimitrov, 'From Recognition – Onwards' in Duma newspaper of 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1992.

<sup>452</sup> Tsocho Shatrov reporting for Duma newspaper, 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992.

patron because much of the identity narration of post-federation Macedonia was upheld by the claim for emancipation and vindicated independence. Operating within the hegemonic discourse of nationalism, Macedonian politics could not make use of Bulgaria's support, even though it could have facilitated their declared goal of asserting Macedonia's place on the Balkans and in Europe. The salience of the interpretations of severed territory and divided nation also prevented re-positioning Bulgaria from the function of malevolent 'Other'. These interpretations used Bulgaria's recognition to perpetuate domestic conflictuality of identity.

Bulgaria is repeatedly portrayed as an aggressor through references to the 'Bulgarian aspirations' towards Macedonia<sup>453</sup>. On the political front accusations for favouring an alleged Bulgarian-Macedonian confederation<sup>454</sup> begin to appear much more frequently as an instrument for summoning political support. The parts of geographical Macedonia in Bulgaria are referred to as the 'oppressed parts of Macedonia'<sup>455</sup>. Macedonia's official active interest in the fate of the people living there is debated as an official position of the state:

*"We do not want anything else from Bulgaria. The only thing we ask of them is to recognize the rights of our minorities, in line with the demands of Europe [and the UN]."*<sup>456</sup>

The assumption of violated rights highlights the distance between 'us' and 'them', while the reference to Europe adds value to the justness of the demand ('to recognize the rights of our minorities'). Bulgaria's refusal to even discuss this issue is interpreted in the most extreme terms:

*"[...] the genocide over the members of the Macedonian nation [...] in Bulgaria [...]"*<sup>457</sup>, *"[...]the] open fascism, which labeled all of Bulgaria's citizens as 'bulgarians',*

<sup>453</sup> Vladimir Goluboski, 52<sup>nd</sup> plenary session, 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 1992, 134.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>455</sup> 41<sup>st</sup> Plenary session on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct 1992, 80.

<sup>456</sup> 43<sup>rd</sup> plenary session, 1<sup>st</sup> Jul 1992, 101.

<sup>457</sup> 43<sup>rd</sup> plenary session, 2<sup>nd</sup> Jul 1992, 35.

*among them the Macedonians, the Turks, and everybody else, and which even tried to change their names [...]"*<sup>458</sup>

The references to 'genocide' and 'fascism' articulate Bulgaria's position as universally unacceptable in moral and political terms. They try to justify Macedonia's concern with the fate of the people of Pirin Macedonia under the sovereignty of Bulgaria, even in matters of the exclusive authority of the state, such as the organization and result of the population census:

*"[...] when we speak of the vital interests of the Macedonian national unity abroad, as in the particular case of the Bulgarian national census which performs legal denationalization of the Macedonians [we should not be silent]."*<sup>459</sup>

Such rhetoric fed into Bulgarian nationalist interpretations of threat and re-enforced them. Thus, realizing the project of independent Macedonian statehood, articulated within the context of nationalism, prevented dissociation from conflictual narratives. It disabled the narration of recognition as anything but a threat to the new state, which perpetuated already conflictual interpretations of identity.

By interpreting Bulgaria's support for Macedonia as destructive of Bulgaria's and unacceptable for Macedonia's international goals, nationalist rhetoric framed it as eventually incongruent with the identities representing the two states and in effect proscribed further rapprochement along the Bulgarian-Macedonian relationship. By bringing back the dominant political discourse to the notions of 'national interest', 'national self-consciousness', 'national responsibility'<sup>460</sup>, it attempted to re-enforce the hegemony of the discourse of nationalism, which had been challenged by the signifiers of the 'European' ('European norms', 'European standards', 'European common processes') structuring the early narratives of the recognition of independence. The intense domestic struggles for political hegemony, characterising the transfer of power between the old and the new ruling élites, took much political energy away out of the bid for Europeanization

<sup>458</sup> 41<sup>st</sup> pleary session, 27<sup>th</sup> Oct 1992, 120.

<sup>459</sup> 52<sup>nd</sup> plenary session, 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 1992, 143.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*

and redirected it into the search for solutions to domestic problems caused by uncertain political rules and identities.<sup>461</sup> Ultimately, the overall political, economic, social, and cultural reforms undertaken in the complex processes of transition challenged established norms and institutions and eventually created a general context of uncertainty which destabilized traditional discursive hegemonies. It visibly compromised the credibility of national identity narratives upheld within this uncertain context.

In Bulgaria this was reflected in the instability of the governments, the persistent grip to power of representatives of the former totalitarian regime, the political and economic insecurity caused by the unsteady transition to democracy and market economy, the questionable legitimacy of the privatization processes, the widespread perceptions of corruption and lawlessness<sup>462</sup>. At the state level this context of uncertainty opened the political space for alternative interpretations better suited to articulate meanings of purpose and role in the new context. They were able to threaten and dislocate key signifiers of nationalist hegemony, particularly in view of its failure to provide in any convincing way a positive source of collective self-identification against the background of looming poverty. In this sense the reforms enabled the dislocation of nationalist discourse and the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse, but they also impeded immediate achievements in the process of Europeanization. This is illustrated by the perpetuated conflictuality of the behaviour towards Macedonia, still governed by key signifiers of nationalism.

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<sup>461</sup> This discursive dynamics prevents subsequent attempts to bring the two states closer on various issues of mutual concern. In the Macedonian parliamentary elections, for example, the affair of the so called 'Bulgarian leaflets' acquired unimaginable dimensions. Sparked by the pre-election distribution of old leaflets in Bulgarian language from the time before the formal codification of Macedonian language, the scandal eventually aimed at discrediting the oppositional party VMRO-DPMNE by exposing its 'pro-Bulgarian' character. Insignificant in anything else but dimensions, the affair is illustrative of the enormous negative potential of political association with 'Bulgarian-ness'. A similar affair in Bulgaria, popularized by the media as 'Mishev gate' (after the name of a notorious informer of the communist security services in Bulgaria whose name first appeared in the arms scandal which brought Dimitrov government down, see <http://www.trud.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=808098> accessed 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2012), which accused Dimitrov's government of an arms deal with Macedonia had even stronger discrediting impact. It eventually led to a vote of non-confidence for the government. Even with the president's repeated mandate, Filip Dimitrov could not gain the necessary support in parliament to form a new government. This is illustrative of the political unacceptability of any relationship with Macedonia other than the one prescribed by the discourse of Bulgarian nationalism.

<sup>462</sup> Ivan Krastev, *Shifting Obsession: Three Essays on the Politics of Anticorruption* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

In Macedonia the process of discrediting nationalist hegemony in favour of an alternative grand discourse was even slower because of the complexities of transition there. Besides the complex processes of democratization and liberalization of the market, post-communist Macedonia also had to address a series of issues arising from the imperative of consolidating statehood and the complex inter-ethnic division, as well as to overcome the impediments before international recognition. The Albanian blockade of the Macedonian referendum for independence<sup>463</sup> alerted to the need of re-defining the basis of Albanian participation in the project of statehood. The perception on behalf of the Albanian minority of exclusion and injustice deepened the domestic divides and created a discourse of domestic Albanian nationalism challenging the notions of 'Macedonian-ness' and antagonizing politics in the new republic. This enormously troubled Macedonia's transition and in important ways threatened the internal stability of Macedonian national identity. Interestingly enough, Albanian nationalism soon took recourse to the signifiers of European discourse in its bid for just political accommodation, thus challenging Macedonian nationalism from within. This determined the initial discursive tension between Macedonian nationalism and Europeanization. Europe's reserved reactions to Macedonian independence, the postponed recognition by the European Community, and the conditions set on the international use of the republic's name as a consequence of Greek objections, did not help the empowerment of the discourse of Europeanization in the newly independent republic. The few tentative steps in the direction of Macedonia's European orientation did not provide sufficient basis for substantial re-thinking of the dominant narratives of 'Macedonian-ness' until well into the 1990s. This is evident in the intransigence in the relationship with Bulgaria, still predominantly governed by the meanings of Macedonian nationalism. Even though tentative, however, the first steps towards 'Europe' were taken in both states as a consequence of the search for a credible vision of national 'Self'.

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<sup>463</sup> At the 23<sup>rd</sup> Plenary session, 17<sup>th</sup> Sep 1991.



### ***Empowering 'Europe' in Bulgaria***

In Bulgaria the Europeanization discourse was taken up by the democratic opposition primarily as an anti-communist alternative to the power establishment associated with the communist past. It interpreted communism as an aberration from Bulgaria's European belonging. This interpretation, perpetuated by the first democratic coalition government, attempted, largely successfully, to construct 'Europe' as a counter discourse to the communist past in terms of 'European legal standards and the ethical and material values of Europe'<sup>464</sup>. In this sense the attraction of the European discourse was initially provided by the notion of 'return'. It made sense of the communist experiment as a passing moment, a lapsus, in Bulgaria's European trajectory:

*"The Road to Europe is not new for Bulgaria. [It] will be only a suffered return after 45 years of forcible exile in the misanthropic communist camp. BULGARIA HAS BEEN AND WILL BE AN INSEPARABLE PART OF EUROPE!"*<sup>465</sup>

This is repeated on numerous occasions. On an official visit to Turkey, a leading Bulgarian parliamentarian asserted, among other things, that 'there is no democracy where the former communists are in power, under any form whatsoever [...]'<sup>466</sup>. This radical break from the communist past also implies dissociation from communist nationalism in domestic and foreign policy. In the European context, Bulgaria's Balkan policies are framed by entirely different principles:

*"Bulgaria sees as its mission to implement European policies in the Balkans, free of historical prejudice [...], good neighbourly relations with all neighbouring states, [...] independent foreign policy which can turn Bulgaria into a factor of stability on the Balkans and in Europe."*<sup>467</sup>

<sup>464</sup> National Conference of the UDF, 14<sup>th</sup> Apr 1992, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>465</sup> Report on the National Conference of the UDF in the Demokratsia newspaper of 15<sup>th</sup> Apr 1992, capitals in the original.

<sup>466</sup> Aleksander Yordanov quoted in Demokratsia newspaper, 29<sup>th</sup> Apr 1992.

<sup>467</sup> Report on the National Conference of the UDF in Demokratsia newspaper, 15<sup>th</sup> Apr 1992.

Focusing on the familiar interpretation of the signifier of national purpose ('factor of stability'), the democrats link the discourse of Europe to a new, non-nationalist foreign policy ('free of historical prejudice'), detached from the imperatives of the past ('good [...] relations with all neighbours'). This is a major modification of the established narrative of a 'special status' in the attitudes towards Macedonia. It signifies detachment from the dependence upon stories of national loss over Macedonia and national tragedy. The rhetorical effect of this interpretation comes from establishing a causal relation between 'returning' to Europe and overcoming bilateral conflictuality:

*"Before the Balkans can become an inseparable part of a truly united Europe, the states from the Balkan region need to walk the avenue of understanding and sincere cooperation. Bulgaria is aware of this responsibility."*<sup>468</sup>

And since the democratic party tapped into the rhetorical resources of the 'Europe' discourse in order to gain leverage in the political game, references to it began to appear increasingly often in the discourse of everyday politics.

*"This is Bulgaria's chance: it managed to push the representatives of the [former communists<sup>469</sup>] off all electable posts. Precisely because of that in a few days we will be able to re-gain our self-esteem as Europeans [by being admitted to the Council of Europe]."*<sup>470</sup>

The first tangible success in Bulgaria's general strategy of 'return to Europe' – the successful bid for membership in the Council of Europe – even though significant in many ways, was rhetorically magnified by the democratic media in order to emphasize the vision of the democratic government and assert the political and symbolic meaning of the accomplishment. Headlines such as 'Democratic Bulgaria Appears on the Big European Stage'<sup>471</sup>, 'Bulgaria Returned to the Bosom of the European Family'<sup>472</sup>, 'It Is the European

<sup>468</sup> National Conference of the UDF, 14<sup>th</sup> Apr 1992, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>469</sup> The official name of the party at this point is Bulgarian Socialist Party (Communists).

<sup>470</sup> Demokratsia newspaper, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1992.

<sup>471</sup> Demokratsia newspaper, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1992.

<sup>472</sup> Demokratsia newspaper, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1992.

*Hour of Stardom for New Democratic Bulgaria*<sup>473</sup>, and *'Hello Europeans'*<sup>474</sup> illustrate this rhetoric. At the same time, the fact of membership is interpreted as recognition on behalf of Europe of the democratic character of the new Bulgarian state and as such it is an authoritative external confirmation of the aspired new identity. Highlighting the specific achievements of democratization, the Bulgarian president emphasizes the importance of this:

*"Membership in the Council of Europe is not a benefaction or a privilege [...]. It is recognition of the democratic changes which the people have made happen in their own state; it is recognition of the people's maturity and wisdom; it is recognition of political culture and civilization. [...] For two and a half years the Bulgarian people created a multi-party political system, independent syndicates, free press, independent radio and television, autonomous universities, democratic multi-party elections, a parliament with an opposition, a president elected by the direct vote of the people."*<sup>475</sup>

The president's address represents an act of 'European' identity articulation. Equating the state with its people, Zhelev completely marginalizes the nationalist source of self-identification, the nation. Even though he uses the national denominator ('Bulgarian'), the president is consistent in his reference to 'the people'. Against the taken-for-granted references to the state community as the 'Bulgarian nation' in political discourse of the time, this nuance is significant. The omission of the 'nation' signifier allows the constitution of the community along the lines of moral categories ('people's maturity and wisdom') and universal values (democracy, 'political culture', 'civilization'). Listing particular steps of the democratization process, as declarative as they might be<sup>476</sup>, aims at materializing the achievement, improving its credibility and highlighting its significance. In his address to the nation the President continues to point to the 'deprivations and difficulties'<sup>477</sup> which

<sup>473</sup> Demokratsia newspaper, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1992.

<sup>474</sup> Demokratsia newspaper, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1992.

<sup>475</sup> Nation's address of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria Dr Zhelyu Zhelev, Sofia, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1992, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>476</sup> The independence of Bulgarian media has been questioned many years after 1992, for instance.

<sup>477</sup> Nation's address, Dr Zhelyu Zhelev, Sofia, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1992, BTA Courier Service.

accompanied the reforms.<sup>478</sup> The reference aims to address popular discontent with the economic crisis and the overall uncertainty created by the transition. By emphasizing that it was these deprivations and difficulties that eventually enabled such a grand success for Bulgaria, he addresses the omission of nationalist discourse which mostly destabilized its hegemony: its failure to address looming poverty in the country. Invoking the familiar signifier of purpose ('[the Bulgarian people] turned [their country] into a stability factor on the Balkans'<sup>479</sup>), the President immediately links his rhetoric to the principal new strategic goal of Bulgaria's politics: membership of the European Community:

*"This is why I will not be too surprised if by the end of the year Bulgaria becomes an associated member of the European Community. [...] Our people deserves this. It demonstrated it with its deeds."*<sup>480</sup>

By presenting association status as a credible political prospect of the near future and as a prospect dependent upon the merit of 'the people', the President rhetorically increases its attractiveness and calls for popular support. At the same time he, again, summons the civic community of the state – and not the nation – as the referent of optimistic future.

The prime minister performs an identical rhetorical move: linking the tangible international success of Council of Europe membership to the imperative of the key international strategic goal, associated membership of the European Community:

*"Our inclusion in the Council of Europe is enormously significant but it needs to be followed by other initiatives and decisions by the end of the year, which should lead to associated status with the European Community."*<sup>481</sup>

The logical link established between the two goals and the already magnified significance of the first aim to construct association with the EC as an even greater success, summon political support and justify prospective policies. The prime minister, in line with the

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<sup>478</sup> He talks of both political and economic reforms even though the criterion for Council of Europe membership refers only to democracy.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>481</sup> Filip Dimitrov at a celebration event of the National Club of the Friends of the European Community, Sofia, National Palace of Culture, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1992, BTA Courier Service.

general line of his party, also falls back on the discursive opposition between Europeanization and the renounced political experiment of the communist past:

*"We repeat the word 'Europe' over and over again, so that it sounds almost like a spell that communism will never ever happen again."*<sup>482</sup>

The idea for the 'enchanted' power of the repetition of the word 'Europe' suggests a high degree of attraction, increased rhetorically by the renouncement of the communist past associated with it. Against the background of this positive prospect, the strategic goal of membership of the European Community, declared from the very beginning, seems more desirable and more achievable. This is confirmed by the insistence that joining the Council of Europe is meant as *'simply the first step to our integration into the community of democratic states and, in the future, the European Community'*<sup>483</sup>, repeated on numerous occasions and from various points of authority.

The credibility of these claims is re-enforced by declarative rhetoric on behalf of Europe, popularized by the Bulgarian media upon every contact with representatives of EC member-states. At the Bulgarian-Portuguese meeting of foreign ministers, for example, the Portuguese foreign minister is quoted as saying:

*"I can express my hope that in May [1992] Bulgaria will be given a green light for initiating [association] negotiations with the European Community."*<sup>484</sup>

The report is published under the headline 'Support on Our Way to Europe' and, together with the repeated comments of the Portuguese foreign minister concerning the 'green light' for negotiations with the EC, it sends a clear message: all effort should be put in direction of achieving the desired status in Europe, which is already so close. The same function performs the publicized address of the vice-president of the European Commission on occasion of a celebratory event at the Bulgarian National Palace of Culture, expressing 'the European Community's wish to start negotiations for associated status'<sup>485</sup>.

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<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>483</sup> Speaker of Parliament Stefan Savov in an interview for Demokratsia newspaper of 30<sup>th</sup> May 1992.

<sup>484</sup> Portugal's foreign minister João di Deus Pinheiro, Lisbon, 29<sup>th</sup> Apr 1992, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>485</sup> Frans Andriessen, Vice-President of the European Commission, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1992, BTA Courier Service.

Even though the beginning of negotiations for associated status is the preliminary step to the loosest form of institutionalized contact with the EC and can hardly be interpreted as a particular achievement<sup>486</sup>, this extensive rhetorical preparation of the event, officially confirmed several days later<sup>487</sup>, renders it politically more significant and increases its popularity:

*“Let no one be fooled that [these achievements] are not connected with the two events of the most recent elections – coming to power of the Union of Democratic Forces [...] and moving into opposition the Bulgarian Socialist Party.”*<sup>488</sup>

The discursive line of associating ‘return to Europe’ with the policies of the democratic coalition government demonstrates the manner in which the discourse of ‘Europe’ is utilized in the political power game: it is meant to increase popular support despite the economic crisis. It also illustrates the process of gradual but persistent empowerment of the discourse of ‘Europe’ in Bulgarian politics.

Even though associated membership status was not confirmed until 1993<sup>489</sup> and enforced until 1995<sup>490</sup>, the beginning of negotiations marked Bulgaria’s step-by-step progress in its aspirations towards Europe. The utilization of the ‘European’ rhetoric in the democratic party’s power struggle ensured the invariable presence of ‘Europe’ on the political agenda of the state. The systematic approach of negotiations applied the ‘Europe’ problematique to all aspects of policy. The asymmetric format of the negotiations (a state applying for associated status in a community of states), on the other hand, enabled their portrayal as a learning process<sup>491</sup>, as a strategy of self-improvement<sup>492</sup>, thus highlighting the general

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<sup>486</sup> Especially given the fact that several Central European states are already registering progress as associated members at the time (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary).

<sup>487</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> May 1992.

<sup>488</sup> Ilko Eshkenazy, chief negotiator in the associated membership negotiations of 14-15 May 1992 in Demokratsia newspaper, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1992.

<sup>489</sup> March 1993, signing of the Association Agreement  
[http://ec.europa.eu/bulgaria/abc/pre\\_accession/history\\_relations/eu-political-relations\\_bg.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/bulgaria/abc/pre_accession/history_relations/eu-political-relations_bg.htm) accessed 15th Feb 2012.

<sup>490</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1995, the Association Agreement comes into force  
[http://ec.europa.eu/bulgaria/abc/pre\\_accession/history\\_relations/eu-political-relations\\_bg.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/bulgaria/abc/pre_accession/history_relations/eu-political-relations_bg.htm) accessed 15th Feb 2012.

<sup>491</sup> ‘Brussels Teaches Sofia a Lesson in Economics’ in Demokratsia newspaper, 15th May 1992.

need for change in every relevant aspect of statehood. In this sense it prompted the credibility of the interpretation of 'return to Europe' as a process of thorough collective identity transformation.

The aspiration for full membership in the European Community, declared as early as negotiations for associated status began, indicates the desired direction of this transformation. By the end of the year when associated membership status was enacted, the government and parliament had agreed upon and sent to the European Council Bulgaria's formal application for full membership of the European Union<sup>493</sup>. Even though the first decision on the application was negative (1997), which is unsurprising given the total breakdown of Bulgaria's financial credibility by 1997 and the acute governmental crisis of the winter of 1996-1997, the political consensus about Bulgaria's aspirations for full integration into the European union had not changed.

Against the background of an unsteady transition and increasing popular discontent with its course, giving up the European aspiration would have meant depriving the state from any meaningful sense of direction. This is significant. By the late 1990s the discourse of Bulgarian nationalism, constituting a closed, self-reliant national community of people united by a common narrative of past tragedy and grandeur, had already become discredited because it no longer provided a positive image of collective 'Self'. Mired in poverty and deprived of immediate prospects of prosperity, Bulgarians could no longer identify with the vision upheld by the discourse of nationalism, which had structured their ideas of purpose at the beginning of transition. The attraction of the 'European' discourse was conditioned by its radical dissociation from the past, by its promise of economic stability, and, to no lesser a degree, by its elusive attainability. So while Bulgaria's identity signifiers of the immediate post-communist period had already been destabilized by the pessimistic political realities, Europeanization proposed an alternative model of self-identification that seemed both positive and optimistic. This is what enabled the

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<sup>492</sup> 'The European Community Association Agreement: Bulgarian's European Bible' in *Demokratsia* newspaper, 14th May 1992.

<sup>493</sup> European Council in Madrid 15-16<sup>th</sup> Dec 1995 see [http://ec.europa.eu/bulgaria/abc/pre\\_accession/history\\_relations/eu-political-relations\\_bg.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/bulgaria/abc/pre_accession/history_relations/eu-political-relations_bg.htm) 15th Feb 2012.

hegemony of the 'Europe' discourse and determined its impact on the transformation of Bulgaria's national identity. The reciprocal incentives provided by Europe throughout the process marked by the formal start of accession negotiations in 1999<sup>494</sup> confirmed the credibility of this identity choice.

### ***Empowering 'Europe' in Macedonia***

Macedonia took a different path to empowering the discourse of 'Europe'. The 'Europe' signifiers were present in Macedonian political discourse from the very beginning of the transition. They revolved around the notions of democracy, peaceful transition, economic prosperity, inter-ethnic tolerance, human rights protection, regional and international cooperation and integration<sup>495</sup>, which were typical 'European' points of reference in the majority of the Central and Eastern European transitioning states. But while in Bulgaria the discourse of 'Europe' was taken up as an oppositional discourse against the establishment representing the past and this is what ensured its political salience, in Macedonia the past was renounced with the rhetoric of national emancipation and independence, which ultimately operated within the discourse of nationalism. The 'Europe' signifiers were meant to uphold the national narrative in a positive optimistic manner but their role at the beginning of transition was supportive: they had to provide long-term direction and guidance. The immediate strategic goal of independent statehood was defined by the discourse of Macedonian nationalism.

This discursive configuration might have been just as successful in empowering 'Europe' as in Bulgaria, if the particular domestic and international contexts framing Macedonia's project of independent statehood had not significantly detached its politics from the European discourse. In the first place, the political leadership of the Albanian minority saw in the European rhetoric a legitimate discursive strategy for advancing the needs and demands of their electorate. It systematically resorted to 'European' signifiers in order to

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<sup>494</sup> The decision is taken on 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 1999 at the Helsinki European Council.

<sup>495</sup> See 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary session 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991 because of the more solemn occasion which this session provides: the inauguration speech by the newly elected president Gligorov.



counteract the nationalist rhetoric of the majority and to ensure fair inclusion of the Albanian element into the project of statehood:

*"[...] the democratic forces in Macedonia will not allow the state to become captive of the calculations for national exclusivity because as such we will never be part of Europe or close to it [...]"*<sup>496</sup>

The overall perception among the minority representatives was that this goal was not accomplished, which is evidenced by the general Albanian voting abstention.<sup>497</sup> Their rhetoric of discontent which called for justice on the basis of 'European' norms was logically opposed to the majority's position, thus juxtaposing the 'European' discourse to the discourse of Macedonian nationalism:

*"The happening of Europeanization raises a series of issues of principle [...]. It exercises pressure over state sovereignty and state stability. Whether willingly or not, [Europe] interferes into the domestic affairs of the state, particularly a 'newly-composed' state [such as ours]."*<sup>498</sup>

Calling upon the grounding principle of the modern state system – inviolability of state sovereignty – the analysis presents Europeanization as intervention and intrusion, rather than a learning process of socialization into the European normative space. The quoted European categorization of Macedonia as a 'newly-composed state' aims to highlight the unacceptability of Europe's position: it contradicts the central Macedonian narrative of continuity of Macedonian national identity. The moral standing of Macedonia's reluctance to allow interference is supported by Europe's recognition of its civic liberalism. An expert representative of the Council of Europe is quoted as saying that she does 'not know any country in Western Europe which gives national minorities such freedom.'<sup>499</sup>

<sup>496</sup> Seyfedin Haruni at the 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 69.

<sup>497</sup> 22<sup>nd</sup> Plenary session, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sep 1991 in the run-up to the referendum, for the post-voting discussions, see 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> sessions on 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Sep 1991.

<sup>498</sup> Europeanization 'Happening': Unfortunately, the European Models for Democratic Society Cannot Be Copied in Macedonia, Puls newspaper, 4<sup>th</sup> Mar 1994.

<sup>499</sup> Lenz-Cornette *ibid.*

It is important to note, however, that even though the discursive attempts of decoupling the European signifiers from the Macedonian narrative of nationhood were evident already in 1991, they did not immediately succeed. Quite to the contrary, there is evidence that Macedonian élites attempted to modify their nationalist rhetoric in order to accommodate some of the Albanian demands. This is visible in the majority's strong line of argumentation in favour of a civic organization of the state, despite popular visions of a national state:

*"[...] we need to respect the opinion of those who said that at this moment no state in Europe has a national constitution and no state in Europe is defined as a national state in its constitution. [they are all] civic states. [...] It's up to us to decide whether we will follow [...] the conditions prescribed by Europe or not."*<sup>500</sup>

The power of the 'Europe' signifier is suggested by the speaker's rhetorical strategy of leaving the options open ('it's up to us to decide'), even though it is implied which one is the correct option. This boldness of argumentation, however, gradually began to sound unconvincing. First, it was voiced from the political left which was associated with the non-national model of statehood of the past. It therefore lacked sufficient credibility as a viable narrative of independent statehood. Second, lack of majoritarian support for it failed to satisfy Albanian discontent, which further discredited its salience. Third, Europe largely failed to provide any substantial incentives in order to re-enforce its credibility and increase the political relevance of Europeanization processes which could have upheld it. The consequences of this triple dynamics prevented stabilizing the 'European' reading of the organization principles of statehood. The discourse of fairness upheld by the Albanian political élite increasingly captured the signifiers of 'Europe' and decoupled them from the central narrative in the majority's justification of independent statehood – a Macedonian state for the Macedonian people.

The discursive current working against the empowerment of the European discourse in Macedonia was significantly re-enforced by Europe's reservations in recognizing Macedonia's international subjectivity in view of Greece's objections to the name of the

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<sup>500</sup> Branko Crvenkovski at the 25<sup>th</sup> Plenary session on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 1991, 27-28.

republic. Without explicitly endorsing Greek intransience in the name dispute, Europe's hesitation undermined Macedonia's international standing and had an extremely negative effect on popular consensus about Europe. This was recognized publicly by Macedonia's president in the months following Macedonian independence:

*"Our recognition by the European Community is already a matter of morality and if it does not happen soon, this will be a defeat of European policies [in Macedonia]."*<sup>501</sup>

The delayed recognition not only challenged the salience of the Europe discourse in Macedonia, it had a destabilizing effect on the entire construct of Macedonian national identity because it questioned the validity of its political form: the independent Macedonian state. Europe's inability to address Greek demands against Macedonia in any meaningful way are interpreted as particularly damaging:

*"[...]today Europe, again, is trading with the national feeling of this people and the dignity of all citizens of Macedonia, when without any legitimacy it took the [...] decision to recognize the state without the name; there is no citizen in this unrecognized Macedonia who does not feel violated, belittled, injured."*<sup>502</sup>

Calling upon arguments from the spheres of morality and legality, such rhetoric exemplifies the damages which non-recognition and partial recognition inflicted upon Europe's standing in the discursive space of Macedonian nationhood. This perception of unfairness began to decouple the Macedonian nationhood narrative from the European discourse in a more categorical manner than the Albanian claim for abidance by Europe. In order to re-create a credible narrative of national direction and purpose, Macedonian political élites resorted to more exclusively nationalist rhetoric at the expense of European discourse, particularly in their defense against Albanian demands for parity in the state.

*"[We are] concerned about whether we meet some European standards. If we do not meet them, the European Community will sanction us, so we must. But why don't these standards apply to Bulgaria, why don't they apply to Serbia, why don't*

<sup>501</sup> President Kiro Gligorov quoted on 14<sup>th</sup> Apr 1992 by BTA from Belgrade.

<sup>502</sup> Blagoy Handjiski at the 43rd Plenary session, 1st Jul 1992, 78-79.

*they apply to Greece, why don't they apply to England? Isn't England a democracy but in the name of nationality [and nationalism] every day bombs explode in London because [Northern] Ireland wants independence and [England] won't give it."*<sup>503</sup>

The fact that the framework for minority rights in Europe was still rudimentary<sup>504</sup> and that Europe itself was highly undecided about the type of protection it wanted to provide<sup>505</sup>, increased the perception of double standards valid for Macedonia but not for Macedonia's protagonists, nor for Europe itself. The vague reference to these standards ('some standards') confirms the diminished credibility which Europe had come to enjoy in Macedonian political discourse on this issue. The suggestion that democracy did not preclude nationalism ('isn't England a democracy'<sup>506</sup>) re-enforced this notion.

The period between Macedonia's declaration of independence and the first major act of international recognition, membership in the United Nations organization in 1993, had a general destabilizing effect on Macedonian national identity and on its domestic and regional security. Evidence for this is the fall of the non-partisan government of Kijusev by mid-1992 and the return to power of the former communists under the leadership of Crvenkovski, which put the process of democratization in the country under serious doubt. It is also interpreted domestically as distancing from Europe:

*"[I]f in power [were] people who had had nothing to do with communism but with true democracy, [we] would have had taken a different road which would have taken us faster to Europe."*<sup>507</sup>

The discreditation of the democracy narrative and the divisions maintained by Albanian discontent challenged the signifiers of Macedonian national identity from within, threatening its strategic political project of statehood.

<sup>503</sup> Trajan Mitsevski, MP representing the Macedonian majority, 41st Plenary session, 28th Oct 1992, 74.

<sup>504</sup> See for reference Gabriel Toggenburg, 'A Rough Orientation through a Delicate Relationship: the European Union's Endeavours for (Its) Minorities', *European Integration Online Papers* 4(16), (2000) at <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2000-016a.htm>.

<sup>505</sup> Based on collective or individual rights – see Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>506</sup> The example is meant to re-enforce the claim, despite its imprecision.

<sup>507</sup> 49th Plenary session, 3rd Sep 1992, 117.

It was further destabilized from without. The fact that UN recognition had been conditional – membership was agreed under the name acceptable to Greece<sup>508</sup> and not under Macedonia's constitutional name – did not remedy Macedonia's international and regional standing in any radical way. A compromise agreement with Greece brokered by the UN did not result in lifting the Greek economic blockade over Macedonia until 1995, which, together with the UN embargo over Yugoslavia, and the reluctance to establish any meaningful bilateral ties with Bulgaria, sealed Macedonia from its main trading partners and pushed the country into economic isolation just as pernicious as the international political vacuum which surrounded it. This had a destabilizing effect on Macedonia's national identity signifiers as it caused a deep economic and societal crisis. Accompanied by the general loss of national direction as a result of the intractability of the dispute with Greece and the halt in Macedonia's international positioning, by the mid-1990s the deep international isolation threatened to destabilize the very project of Macedonian statehood.

To avoid this, the Macedonian leadership declared its readiness to discuss Greek demands and make progress in overcoming the dispute with Greece. Other than the name objection, Greece laid claims on key identity formulations in Macedonia's constitution (the formulation of duty of care for the Macedonians in neighbouring countries<sup>509</sup> interpreted as irredentist) and key Macedonian national symbols (the so called Virginia sun which appeared on Macedonia's first national flag<sup>510</sup>). The fact that Macedonia was willing to give these up in order to break international isolation, testifies both for the destabilization which had shaken the construct of Macedonian national identity and for the search for new direction which was illustrated by the desire to re-launch the project of Europeanization.

In view of Macedonia's new placatory policy towards Greece and the progress made in the bilateral dispute, Europe was finally ready to establish diplomatic relations with Macedonia (1995) and begin granting assistance under PHARE (1996). This enabled, for the first time

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<sup>508</sup> Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYRoM).

<sup>509</sup> Art.49 of the 1991 Constitution, which Macedonia had to amend.

<sup>510</sup> Also coerced into changing in the name of appeasing Greece.

in years, improving the credibility of Macedonia's European option and increasing the relevance of European discourse to Macedonian politics. It was the breakthrough in the economic and political isolation and the first European funds that upheld optimistic narratives about trade and development and gradually re-introduced the European signifiers as guidelines in Macedonian politics. Whether debating tax and tariffs, wheat production, education or elections, the norm was gradually beginning to be measured against the 'European standards'.<sup>511</sup> This conditioned the possibility of re-narrating Macedonian politics in terms of 'Europe' despite the operationalization of the European signifiers by the Albanian political leadership and its initially divisive effects.

As in Bulgaria, membership in the Council of Europe was considered a stepping stone in the Europeanization process. Even though it, too, was postponed until 1995, when the problems with Greece began to be resolved, it marked the start of institutionalizing the Europeanization process in Macedonia. Even though the strategic goal of European integration was not an immediate political option, dialogue with the European institutions established by the mid-1990s initiated the steady process of empowering the European discourse. Not unlike Bulgaria, Macedonia embarked on the way to Europe because it lacked any other sensible political alternative. On the one hand, the imperatives of the processes of transition to democracy and market economy indicated this clearly. On the other hand, the process of consolidating statehood, halted by the country's embroilment into a severe inter-ethnic crisis<sup>512</sup> and strained regional relations, also suggested European integration as the adequate solution. In this sense, even though much later than in Bulgaria, the political will for Europeanization produced similar dynamics, thus conditioning a hegemony of the European discourse. But it was not until 2001 that an association agreement was signed between Macedonia and the EU. Immediately after its entering into force in 2004, Macedonia applied for EU membership and was granted the official candidate status in the following year. This (delayed but) steady progress towards Europe ensured the credibility of the 'European' narration of Macedonian identity and slowly dislocated many of the signifiers of Macedonian nationalism.

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<sup>511</sup> Plenary sessions from 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 1995 to 2<sup>nd</sup> Apr 1996 provide examples of the debates on the above topics and the European indicator.

<sup>512</sup> Culminating in the civil conflict of 2001.

### ***Europeanization Effects on Bulgarian-Macedonian Post-Recognition Narratives of 'Otherness'***

Investigating the narratives of recognition and post-recognition in Bulgarian-Macedonian inter-state relations of the early transition reveals interesting, albeit still subtle, transformations in both states (Table 10). Initially, narratives of recognition were articulated predominantly within the discourse of nationalism. They upheld mutually exclusive identity constructions, which were inevitably conflictual. The presumably amicable act of recognition performed in reference to 'Europe' was interpreted within this discourse as consequential and hostile. With the gradual empowerment of the discourse of Europeanization, however, alternative interpretations of recognition and post-recognition began to structure bilateral relations. Where they managed to provide credible reading of central identity signifiers, these interpretations upheld less conflictual national identity constructions. In Bulgaria, the credibility of the 'European' reading of identity was improved by the immediate incentives received from 'Europe'. The optimistic, positive identity of deserved progress, which it upheld, prompted less antagonistic interpretations of the Macedonian 'Other'. It also increased the appeal of 'Europe' as a rhetorical self-enhancement strategy and stabilized the process of Europeanization. In Macedonia Europeanization did not provide sufficient incentives for a credible reading of Macedonian national identity at the time. It increased the salience of interpretations which conflicted with sedimented meanings of national identity signifiers, without providing a credible alternative. Within the discourse of 'Europe', therefore, narratives of recognition and post-recognition upheld a discouraging vision of Macedonian identity domestically seen as largely pessimistic, unfair and undeserved. This is what compromised the appeal of Europeanization and perpetuated nationalist antagonisms until a more tangible notion of 'Europe' was able to provide a more credible reading of Macedonian national identity.

State	Bulgaria	Macedonia
Signifiers upheld by Nationalism	International voice	Vindication
	Special status towards Macedonia	Renouncing protectionism
	Protecting territory against threat	Links with adjacent Macedonian territories
	Preserving the unity of the nation	Close relationship with Macedonian minorities on the other side of the border
Signifiers upheld by Europeanization	Overcoming nationalist conflict and upholding civic nationhood as indicative of break from the past	Non-national statehood as remnant from the past
	Good relations with neighbours as a sign of progress	Civic statehood as accommodating Albanian minority in par with the majority
	European incentives increasing political relevance	Compromise not encouraged through international recognition

Table 10. Identity Narratives of Recognition and Post-Recognition in Bulgaria and Macedonia.

## SECTION II:

## NARRATIVES STRUCTURING THE LANGUAGE DISPUTE

Exploring transformations along another line of identity narratives articulating ‘otherness’ – the language dispute – which increased in salience during a later phase of the transition, reveals further aspects of the discursive mechanisms through which Europeanization upheld stories of national identity and increased their credibility. Chronologically, the language dispute governed Bulgarian-Macedonian relations from the mid- to the late 1990s. The period was characterized by very different political outcomes in the two states determined by changing discursive hegemonies. The empowerment of the discourse of Europeanization had already begun to transform discursive realities even though the hegemony of nationalism had proven difficult to shift. The different salience of Europeanization in the two studied states helps highlight the discursive logic of capturing the same identity signifiers – in different contexts – and discursively re-positioning them in a new vision of ‘Self. Inevitably, this also impacted bilateral conflictuality and facilitated reconciliation.



### ***Changed Contexts***

By the mid-1990s the exhilaration of the first post-communist years had waned to give way to the pragmatic politics of transition and international re-positioning. Both Bulgaria and Macedonia had initiated the transition to functioning democracy, and both states had also seen representatives of the former communist élites return to power in the course of the democratic electoral competition. But while in Bulgaria the partial retreat of the democratic opposition meant temporary re-enforcement of nationalist discourse, in Macedonia it was associated with a further destabilization of the national identity upheld by the discourse of nationalism. This is displayed in the dynamics of domestic inter-ethnic accommodation. In Bulgaria it followed the model designed during the negotiated regime change under the patronage of the former communists and, in view of their return to power, it was neither challenged nor changed. In Macedonia, in contrast, the return to power of the former communists ensured increased political participation for the minority élites, which the Macedonian project of national statehood had not been prepared for, and perpetuated a serious inter-ethnic divide in the country.<sup>513</sup>

The transition to a market economy had also been initiated in both states and as this naturally led to major re-structuring of the whole economies, it was also accompanied by serious economic hardship and increasing poverty among the populations. In Bulgaria the economic crisis stimulated significant re-thinking of the meaning of the signifiers of direction and purpose and facilitated Bulgaria's orientation towards 'Europe' as a symbol of economic prosperity and stability. Together with the first successful steps in the process of European integration, this categorically empowered the discourse of 'Europe' and permitted its gradual stabilization in the national discursive space. In Macedonia, however, this process was hampered by Europe's reservations about recognizing Macedonian statehood and in establishing an international dialogue with the independent republic.

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<sup>513</sup> Valeri Stoyanov, *The Turkish Population in Bulgaria between the Poles of Ethnopolitics* (Sofia: LIK, 1998); Židas Daskalovski, *The Macedonian Conflict of 2001: Problems of Democratic Consolidation* (Libertas Paper 56, 2004).

Against the background of the Greek economic blockade of Macedonia, the UN embargo on Serbia and the only limited trade ties with Bulgaria, Macedonia quickly lapsed into deep isolation which exacerbated the functioning of its economy and deepened the economic crisis. This challenged key signifiers of national identity. In the lack of immediate optimistic prospects and European incentives, meanings of identity were seriously destabilized, leading to widespread perception of national insecurity.

So, while in Bulgaria the process of consolidating the post-totalitarian statehood and re-thinking Bulgarian nationhood in the context of transition actually facilitated Bulgaria's (re) turn to Europe, in Macedonia it deepened the international isolation and initiated a process of introspective re-formulation of Macedonian identity, challenged from within by the political struggle for ethnic accommodation. Eventually the process did produce an interpretation of national identity compatible with the discourse of 'Europe' but it took longer and was more cumbersome. Macedonia's first successful steps towards European integration, even though delayed, greatly facilitated the empowerment of this re-narration of identity in view of the strategic goal of Europeanization and helped stabilize it.

Bulgarian-Macedonian relations evolved in congruence with these domestic and international contexts. The high degree of instability initially perpetuated bilateral antagonisms and raised further issues of disagreement between the two states. With the gradual progress of Europeanization, however, and the re-interpretation of national signifiers of identity associated with it, a notable relaxation in the bilateral tension was made possible. This is testified by the significant progress in resolving the inter-state language dispute which had frozen Bulgarian-Macedonian relations for half a decade.

### ***The Language Dispute and Its Conflictual (Non-)Narratives***

The Bulgarian-Macedonian language dispute, like the other lines of conflictuality between the two states, was predicated on two mutually exclusive identity narratives of 'otherness'. The first one was Bulgaria's claim of patronage over everything Macedonian. The second was Macedonia's denial of commonality with everything Bulgarian. As two extreme

interpretations of the historical past of the region, these identity narratives logically positioned Bulgaria and Macedonia in a relationship of unreconcilable antagonism. Elaborating on its historical narratives of commonality, popular Bulgarian discourse claimed that, because of the great degree of similarity of the language spoken in Macedonia with the South-Western dialects of the Bulgarian language, Macedonian was, in fact, Bulgarian. Pointing to the late codification of Macedonia's official state language<sup>514</sup>, Bulgarian narratives aimed to demonstrate the 'artificial' character of Macedonian and reveal its 'true' nature as a dialect of Bulgarian.

Macedonian narratives, on the other hand, attempted to deny any substantial commonality with the Bulgarian language, pointing to the scientifically proven autochthonous character of Macedonian, and referring to its historical standing through the centuries. Macedonian national language as a signifier of identity capable of articulating national uniqueness despite the internal and external contestations against the state's identity, had a central discursive position in Macedonian identity narratives:

*"Language is our only fatherland."*<sup>515</sup>

This awareness of the significance of Macedonian language as the ultimate locus of Macedonian-ness impervious to foreign intrusion is not new. But in a time of re-defining Macedonian identity and the internal and external insecurity the process generated, national language began to fix identity in a categorical way like no other identity signifier. The formal codification of Macedonian language concurs chronologically with the first recognized Macedonian state.<sup>516</sup> In this sense it establishes tangible links with Macedonian statehood. The project of re-negotiating the terms of statehood of the early 1990s brought it back to the political agenda of the state as evidence for the viability of the project. Narratives upholding the centrality of national language in the imagining of the national

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<sup>514</sup> 1944, compared to the first Bulgarian codification in 1878.

<sup>515</sup> Blazhe Koneski quoted in Puls newspaper from 13<sup>th</sup> May 1994.

<sup>516</sup> Within the Yugoslav socialist federation.

community dominated the discursive space of Macedonian politics around the time of the declaration of independence.<sup>517</sup>

At an official level these narratives first clashed with the Bulgarian national stories in an inter-state dispute in 1994, around the time of the first official visit of the Macedonian president Kiro Gligorov to Bulgaria upon Bulgarian invitation. There had been language-related incidents earlier in the year, but they had not acquired such salience because of the lower (ministerial or ambassadorial) level at which they had occurred. One had involved the refusal of the Bulgarian minister of education<sup>518</sup> to sign bilateral agreements discussed with his counterpart in Skopje in the Macedonian language. A similar issue had arisen around the Bulgarian ambassador to Skopje earlier in the year<sup>519</sup>. With the expected publicity surrounding the visit of President Gligorov to Bulgaria, however, these incidents culminated in a full-blown diplomatic conflict. The particular reason for it was disagreement on the wording describing the official languages of the two states. This issue quickly became central during the official part of the visit because of the series of bilateral documents which had been prepared for signing by the presidents. In line with the governmental guidelines, Bulgaria insisted that the documents be signed in 'the official language of the two states as per their constitutions'<sup>520</sup>, without further specifications in the text. The assumption was that the two states shared a language.<sup>521</sup> Macedonia, on the other hand, insisted on mentioning the Macedonian national denominator when specifying which the official language of the state was. The two divergent demands eventually prevented the signing of any of the prepared documents during the visit. The political impossibility to supersede these formulations in any constructive way during the following years in effect completely froze Bulgarian-Macedonian relations and blocked all inter-state

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<sup>517</sup> Kiro Gligorov speaking at the 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary session on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1991, 19 "[...] *against all our discontent, we dare not forget that today our language is a European language, that for 45 years only it developed and made our literature, poetry and art flourish, which is what determines the cultural face of a nation.*"

<sup>518</sup> Minister of Science and Education Prof. Marko Todorov during a visit to Skopje on 14<sup>th</sup> Apr 1994, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>519</sup> Angel Dimitrov, commented in parliament on 20<sup>th</sup> Apr 1994, 43.

<sup>520</sup> Symeon Giannakos, 'Bulgaria's Macedonian Dilemma', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 3(2), (2001): 153-170.

<sup>521</sup> Together with the other two official forms of the Bulgarian language – the language spoken in the Republic of Bulgaria and the language spoken by the Bulgarians living in the region of Banat, currently divided between Romania, Serbia and Hungary.

dialogue at a time when both states could have benefited enormously from bilateral cooperation.

To fully understand the meaning of this diplomatic and political deadlock and how language became such a crucial inter-state problem, it is necessary to understand the identity narratives which conditioned it. Language represented a central signifier of national identity constructs in both states. Different nationalist discourses, however, produced divergent interpretations of it.

For Bulgaria, linguistic similarity with the dialects spoken in Macedonia had provided justification for Bulgaria's historical claim for patronage over the people living there. Despite the different political path which Macedonia had taken over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bulgaria had continued to commemorate and cultivate historical commonality with it. On the basis of shared historical past, 'Macedonia' had come to represent an important aspect of Bulgaria's cultural heritage: many classical works of Bulgarian literature treat Macedonia and its tragic loss as a key element of the Bulgarian national story<sup>522</sup>. This story, supported by Bulgarian national historiography, had translated 'Macedonia' into the Bulgarian political space as originally Bulgarian in ethnicity and culture. The similarity of the Macedonian language with Bulgarian was interpreted as further evidence of this. Against the background of the general salience of language as a signifier of Bulgarian nationhood, treating Macedonian as a language of a foreign state posed a serious threat over Bulgaria's national identity construct. In a time of general insecurity caused by the deepening economic crisis, this was politically dangerous. Already destabilized by the reforms and without many tangible European incentives, Bulgarian narratives of national identity could not accommodate the threat. Instead, they resorted to the familiar interpretations of nationalism. This rhetorical (re-)turn was facilitated by the democratic government's collapse<sup>523</sup> and the looming electoral victory of the former communists<sup>524</sup>.

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<sup>522</sup> One prominent example is Dimitar Talev's four volume epic novel on Macedonia.

<sup>523</sup> In 1992, followed by two expert governments.

<sup>524</sup> Who formally returned to power in 1995.

'Recognizing the state but not recognizing the nation'<sup>525</sup>, the ambiguous formula declared as early as 1991 at the prospect of Macedonian independence, came to structure Bulgaria's position in the language dispute despite the inherent contradiction in it. Sovereign statehood carries with it the legitimacy to decide on domestic affairs of the state, one of which is choosing an official state language. The way nationhood is constructed usually pre-determines the choice of languages. Bulgaria's ambiguity attempted to present recognition as an act of condescension, assuming a role in the process which it did not have. The assumption was highly contested in Macedonia itself because of the notion of patronage it imposed. Introducing historical narratives into the political discourse as valid political argumentation, Bulgaria's position durably linked policy towards Macedonia to the narratives of the past. Their high degree of sedimentation prevented the establishment of constructive inter-state dialogue, taking account of differences in the interpretations of nationhood. Language, as a key element in the constitution of the Macedonian national community, was one of the national signifiers most bitterly contested by Bulgaria, not least because of its key role in the construction of Bulgarian national identity itself. Pointing to the 'artificial' and 'invented' character of the Macedonian language<sup>526</sup>, Bulgarian nationalist discourse began to treat its use as an official language of another state as encroachment upon Bulgaria's cultural heritage. Macedonia's official declarations of the autochthonous character of its national language were taken as an affront to the memory of the dead in the Bulgarian struggles over Macedonia.<sup>527</sup> These interpretations made impossible official acknowledgement of Macedonian as another state's language within the discursive space of Bulgarian nationalist discourse. Thus, the concrete steps the government of Filip Dimitrov made in order to activate bilateral relations with Macedonia were hamstrung by formulations unacceptable to Macedonia. Against the background of more pressing international imperatives for both states, this regional stand-off was not widely problematized but by

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<sup>525</sup> Zhelyu Zhelev, *In Spite of It All: My Political Biography* (Sofia: Kolibri, 2005).

<sup>526</sup> 'Demonstrated' by Bulgarian linguistics and historiography, see for instance Valentin Stankov, *Bulgarian Literary Language in the Revival: Scientific Facts and Pseudo-Scientific Arguments* (Sofia: Macedonian Scientific Institute, 2003), Dimitar Tyulekov, *Political Myth for the 'Macedonian Minority' in Bulgaria* (Blagoevgrad: Macedonian Scientific Institute, 2007).

<sup>527</sup> Dimitar Dragnev, *The Skopje Icon Blazhe Koneski: Macedonian Linguist or Serbian Political Worker?* (Sofia, Macedonian Scientific Institute, 1998).

the mid-1990s it had already become an intractable inter-state dispute which discredited the two states' claims for democratization and Europeanization.

It is significant that Bulgarian public space was predominantly silent on the subject. Recognizing the priority of historical narratives of nationhood over economic interest considerations would have caused a serious erosion of legitimacy even within the hegemony of nationalism. History was called upon, instead, to serve a different, legitimate, purpose:

*"In their [Balkan and European] aspirations Bulgaria and Macedonia will walk together, because this is what history obliges us to do, because this is what our present and our future summon us for."*<sup>528</sup>

If cooperation is dictated by history, then failure to achieve it defies the credibility of the historical narratives. The identity of the Bulgarian national collectivity, still oriented towards the past and embedded in stories of national 'Self' referring to past glory and grandeur, was not ready to accommodate such challenge. This is why Bulgaria's insistence on the controversial formulation went widely unacknowledged in Bulgaria. When responsibility for the bilateral deadlock had to be taken, it was sought in Macedonia, not Bulgaria. Pointing to the straightforward way in which cooperation agreements were signed with the Albanian president at the time, Zhelev is quoted as saying:

*"It is so easy, you see, when politicians do not meddle in the work of linguists."*<sup>529</sup>

Implying that politics and linguistics should be kept separate (a task Bulgarian identity narratives failed to achieve, not least in the rhetoric of the president), Zhelev attempted to rhetorically transfer the responsibility for this failure because of its incompatibility with the state's official position:

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<sup>528</sup> Concluding speech by Aleksander Yordanov, Speaker of Bulgarian Parliament at the 364<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 26<sup>th</sup> Apr 1994.

<sup>529</sup> At the meeting with the Albanian President Berisha upon signing the bilateral agreements in both Bulgarian and Albanian language, Puls newspaper, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1994.

*“Establishing friendly and ever closer relations of cooperation with the Republic of Macedonia [...] requires mutual trust and denouncing some prejudices from the near past.”*<sup>530</sup>

It is unsurprising then that Bulgaria's inability to align its state's behaviour with its political rhetoric was not happily commented on. It remained a missed opportunity for advancing relations with Macedonia, which for the next half a decade remained at a complete standstill. The lack of political will to find a solution acceptable to both sides was not problematized in the context of domestic instability.

As pointed above, in Macedonia, too, language had been one of the central signifiers of national identity. Against the background of contested nationhood and conditional statehood, language had come to represent Macedonia's categorical distinctness within the federation it had been part of and amidst encroaching neighbours. Precisely because of past commonality with Bulgaria, the Macedonian nation-building process had taken particular care to limit similarities with Bulgarian when codifying the national language. This had been accomplished by adopting cultural vocabulary of non-Slav origin, by introducing non-Cyrillic alphabet signs, by changing the orthography of common words in order to avoid signs used in Bulgarian.<sup>531</sup> Beside the differences fostered with the codification of the Macedonian language, the half century of modern Macedonian statehood had cultivated a national linguistic community which had grown apart from Bulgaria. In this sense commonality with the Bulgarian language had notably diminished by the early 1990s. So when Macedonian publics and élites were faced with the renewed Bulgarian claims of patronage, their indignation stirred a wave of anti-Bulgarian rhetoric. This happened at a time when Macedonian statehood was struggling against external non-recognition and almost complete international isolation. In the lack of any tangible European incentives, Macedonia turned to the discourse of nationalism to address the challenge against its identity. The return to power of the former communists<sup>532</sup> and the demands of the Albanian political leadership, however, posed another, domestic challenge

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<sup>530</sup> Introductory speech by Aleksander Yordanov, Speaker of Bulgarian Parliament at the 364<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 26<sup>th</sup> Apr 1994.

<sup>531</sup> Blazhe Koneski, *Grammar of the Macedonian Literary Language* (Skopje: Kultura, 1982).

<sup>532</sup> Their party, the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, was re-elected in 1992 and governed until 1998.



to the Macedonian nationalist discourse and the identity construction it upheld. Destabilized from within and threatened from without, the discourse of Macedonian nationhood could preserve its credibility only if it did not react to Bulgarian claims. This conditioned Macedonia's retreat from inter-state dialogue with Bulgaria and contributed to the prolonged freeze of bilateral relations.

This is noted in Macedonian public space. The leading media report Macedonian reactions to the language dispute as 'either silence, or no comment'.<sup>533</sup> At the same time, these reactions are assessed as 'paradoxical' against the background of the excessive preoccupation of Macedonian politics with the issue of organizing and carrying out a national census in six languages:

*"The paradox here results from the greater [need] to protect the Macedonian language in our own state than against official Bulgaria's refusal to acknowledge it."*<sup>534</sup>

The commentary points to the domestic threat against national language as a signifier of identity which diverted political attention from addressing the bilateral problem. At the same time Macedonian discourses do not omit the significance of this problem and the implications it might have. They point to its discrepancy with the 'time of democracy and attempts for Europeanization of the Balkans'<sup>535</sup>, as well as to the threat it posed to national freedom, national memory and national culture<sup>536</sup>. This reveals the central position of language in the construction of nationhood:

*"[...] without language, without identity, without nation, there is only naked territory and geographical spaces."*<sup>537</sup>

The intricate link established between language, identity and nation points to their significance for the national subjectivity of the state and aims to justify the categorical position of the Macedonian leadership. It continues the long-standing tradition of defense

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<sup>533</sup> Puls newspaper, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1994.

<sup>534</sup> Puls newspaper, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1994.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*

against similar attacks, arguing that these issues are subject to domestic political consensus and cannot be an object of international debates and contestation:

*“The Macedonian language is part of Macedonia’s national identity and this is a topic which cannot be discussed [by anybody else but Macedonia].”<sup>538</sup>*

Discarding Bulgaria’s historical claims as irrelevant and inappropriate, Macedonian rhetoric refers to the ‘reality’ of Macedonia<sup>539</sup> and its ‘happening’ and ‘occurring upon’<sup>540</sup> Bulgarian politics. The verbs of action discursively re-enforce the notion of ‘reality’. From the viewpoint of ‘reality’, this rhetorical line goes, there could not have been any other Macedonian reaction despite Macedonia’s complicated international and domestic situation. Furthermore, because of the complications, this reaction is interpreted in heroic terms:

*“In extremely heavy and difficult political, economic and military realities and various combinations against Macedonia by its neighbours and the wider world, Macedonia managed to promote, again, in front of the Bulgaria state, its position of autonomous subject of statehood and nationhood.”<sup>541</sup>*

The implicit heroisation of the stance taken by Macedonia in the bilateral relations performs the function of justification for the negative consequences ensuing from it. In the context of complete international isolation and deteriorating internal stability, closing the possibly only door open for Macedonia in the region requires serious discursive argumentation. Explicit analytical formulations appear to address this need:

*“It seems that not signing the agreements was, in fact, the best that could have happened: Bulgaria found itself, once again, facing straight into the reality called Macedonia. And this is the first step in the long march of renouncing the illusions of history.”<sup>542</sup>*

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<sup>538</sup> Puls newspaper, 29<sup>th</sup> Apr 1994.

<sup>539</sup> Described as “independent sovereign state, equal political subject in the international relations and stable partner in the dialogue with everybody, including Bulgaria” by Puls newspaper, 29<sup>th</sup> Apr 1994.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>541</sup> Puls newspaper, 29<sup>th</sup> Apr 1994.

<sup>542</sup> Puls newspaper, analysis from 29<sup>th</sup> Apr 1994.

Discursively presenting the two states' failure to reach any form of agreement and sign any particular document of cooperation as 'the best' possible outcome is a strategy of reducing its political impact for Macedonia. Placing the event into a chain of supposedly systematic efforts on behalf of Macedonia ('once again', 'the first step') to stand its grounds before the historically 'deluded' opponent, also attempts to depict it as a desired political outcome and not a serendipitous course of events. The same purpose serves the detailed political analysis of the economic and political situation in Bulgaria as 'full of contradictions',<sup>543</sup>:

*"People's lives get worse every day, inflation grows and the value of the Bulgarian Lev against the dollar is declining."*<sup>544</sup>

References to the high levels of corruption and criminalization of Bulgaria's transition<sup>545</sup> attempt to play down the potential value of any inter-state dialogue with Bulgaria and to understate the potential losses of failing to sign the planned bilateral trade and business agreements. In a time of Macedonian isolation and crisis, the political responsibility for non-constructive foreign policy behaviour could be too risky. Presenting dialogue with Bulgaria as non-productive, other than offensive to Macedonian nationhood, serves the purpose of neutralizing these political implications.

### ***Narratives of Reconciliation – Resolving the Language Dispute***

With the gradual progress in Bulgaria's efforts of Europeanization, however, the language dispute began to attract political attention, mainly because of the questions it raised about the nature of Bulgaria's relations with its neighbours. In view of Bulgaria's formal application for full EU membership from the end of 1995 and the prospects for its success, the official position towards Macedonia began to receive criticism. In an editorial piece entitled 'United Europe, the Barbarians and Civilization', the democratic party's

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<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*, detailed materials on the Bulgarian corporation Multigroup notorious with its links with organized crime cartels.

mouthpiece<sup>546</sup> analysed modern Balkan nationalism as an idiosyncratic element of the worst inventions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in parallel with Barbarianism in the Roman Empire. The language dispute with Macedonia is interpreted as a remnant of this ‘Barbarianism’ of modern nationalism:

*“[We risk] to stare in awe outside New Europe [like the ancient barbarians in front of the Empire], while it tries to understand exactly what language dispute there is to solve [...] and how it threatens our national identity.”<sup>547</sup>*

Similar rhetoric began to come even from the lines of the socialists. This is remarkable because it was precisely the policies of the socialist government that re-enforced the freeze in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations by politicizing controversial nationhood narratives in the first place. Speaking as a representative of the socialist leadership, the future Bulgarian president confirms:

*“We need to admit that our two states have better relations with their other neighbours than with each other, which is incongruent with the good historical, economic and cultural ties traditional between us in the past.”<sup>548</sup>*

The statement still operates within the familiar Bulgarian narrative of shared past but represents an important modification. It avoids the conflictual interpretation of ‘brotherhood’ by emphasizing the amity in the relationship (‘good [...] ties between us’). This makes it acceptable to the Macedonian side, which is not comfortable with the insistence on ‘excessive closeness’<sup>549</sup> with Bulgaria. It also enables problematizing the freeze in bilateral relations:

*“We have been unable to establish the optimal environment for development of our relations [...] and we have lost from this. The peoples on both sides of the border have lost, families have lost, businessmen have lost, those who needed the intellectual*

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<sup>546</sup> The Demokratsia newspaper.

<sup>547</sup> Ivo Berov, ‘United Europe, the Barbarians and Civilization’ in Demokratsia newspaper from 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>548</sup> Georgi Parvanov, Vice-Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Bulgarian Socialist Party in an interview for Puls newspaper from 26<sup>th</sup> Apr 1996.

<sup>549</sup> As the Macedonian interviewer suggests, this is what damaged Bulgaria’s image of benevolent partner in Macedonia’s international relations, see Georgi Parvanov, interview for Puls newspaper from 26<sup>th</sup> Apr 1996.

*contact with the other side have lost, [geopolitically] which is most important, we have lost from this.* <sup>550</sup>

Interpreting the lack of good bilateral relations as a 'loss' and emphasizing the many implications of this loss at the personal, economic, cultural, and national level is a significant change in the narratives on Macedonia. Coming from the lines of the socialists who are the ruling party at the time, it signifies a detachment from the traditional nationalist narrative of a closed community defined through its losses in the past, and signals an orientation towards the benefits of the present. Articulated by the leader of the renewed socialist party bidding for a turn in power, this interpretation indicates political legitimacy. Framing the discussion on Macedonia in these terms helps identify specific reasons for the freeze in bilateral relations, thus opening up the discursive space to the search of possible solutions:

*"We need to admit that both in Sofia and in Skopje there are reporters and public and political figures who, with their statements and actions, malevolently increase the reservations on both sides of the border."* <sup>551</sup>

Singling out those held responsible for the general deterioration of relations among a group of journalists and opinion-makers is a clear indication for an attempt to acquit the government in its official position. Immediately, this points to the most controversial issue – the language dispute – and the possible avenues for its closure:

*"The issue of the language which the documents between Bulgaria and Macedonia should be signed in is a matter of secondary importance, and its current escalation is fed by factors and powers disinterested in developing our relations in a positive direction. [...] Our party and parliamentary group is actively working to find a formula around the language issue which would be acceptable to both states."* <sup>552</sup>

Interpreting the language dispute as a matter of secondary importance is already an attempt at depoliticizing it and taking it off the urgent political agenda. This discursive

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<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*

move is being performed repeatedly (in the same interview duplicating 'this is not even the most important issue'<sup>553</sup> and on further occasions<sup>554</sup>), thus emphasizing its validity.

With the fall of the socialist government the following year and the electoral victory of the democrats, this rhetoric was taken up as an official governmental policy towards Macedonia. 'Solving' the language dispute with Macedonia became one of the first foreign policy goals of the Kostov government<sup>555</sup>, both as a publicity-generating strategy and as an attempt to take credit for the 'Europeanization' of Bulgaria's relations with its neighbours. The governmental change in Macedonia as a result of the electoral victory of the Macedonian right<sup>556</sup> stimulated a similar dynamics. The new Macedonian prime minister Georgievski, often attacked for his moderate position in Macedonia's Balkan policies and accused of being 'pro-Bulgarian', was also a factor in reaching a compromise. His leadership encouraged an intensified bilateral dialogue with Bulgaria. Starting at ambassadorial<sup>557</sup> and ministerial<sup>558</sup> level, the two governments began to gradually normalize political discourse surrounding bilateral relations by attaching it to the practicalities of mutually beneficial cooperation in particular areas. Discussed is the establishment of a free trade zone between the two states, agreements avoiding double taxation, agreements for protection and promotion of mutual investment, cooperation in the airway and railway transport, etc. The issues of possible bilateral cooperation are organized in a total of 23 agreements whose signing had been blocked since the beginning of the language dispute in 1994. Framing the relations between the two states in the discourse of mutual interest logically raised the question why this had not been done earlier<sup>559</sup> and enabled declarative certainty of progress in the conflictual areas:

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<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>554</sup> See Parvanov, speeches at <http://www.president.bg/news.php?type=3>.

<sup>555</sup> Ivan Kostov, 1997-2001 elected with the mandate of the democratic party.

<sup>556</sup> Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity forms the new government in Nov 1998 headed by Ljubco Georgievski.

<sup>557</sup> Briefing on the Bulgarian ambassador to Skopje's approval for a preliminary text of a prospective bilateral agreement in Demokratsia newspaper 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>558</sup> Macedonia's economic minister Nikola Gruevski visits Bulgaria for a meeting with his Bulgarian counterpart Valentin Vassilev to discuss the particulars of prospective economic cooperation on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>559</sup> 'Relief in trade contacts with Macedonia from the beginning of 2000' in Demokratsia newspaper 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

*“By the time [these agreements] are enforced, the ‘language dispute’ will have been solved by the diplomacies of our two states.”<sup>560</sup>*

Avoiding contentious abstract formulations in the everyday political talks between the two states helped achieve progress in these efforts because it allowed their depoliticization. By taking the focus off matters of principle, the political dialogue centred around improving the cooperation framework in specific areas. This emphasized the pragmatic benefits of a good relationship and the missed opportunities of the prolonged bilateral freeze.

Against the background of Bulgaria’s active efforts for Europeanization and the intensified dialogue for cooperation in a series of areas, Bulgarian leadership was eventually able to produce a formal position on the controversial issues in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, which could gain political legitimacy and be officially accepted. The special position which Macedonia occupied in the Bulgarian national narrative represented a particular challenge in this task. Empowering the discourse of ‘Europe’ proved capable of providing an interpretation of this position which simultaneously preserved its special status and removed the conflictuality surrounding it. At an official celebration of the anniversary of Bulgarian parliamentarism, the Bulgarian prime minister chose to declare:

*“Going back in history I would probably not err if I said that, after the word ‘Bulgaria’, the most frequently repeated word on the premises of the Bulgarian parliament had been the word ‘Macedonia’. Looking into the future, however, I am convinced, the most frequently repeated word [here] will be the word ‘Europe’.”<sup>561</sup>*

Highlighting the dynamics of the re-orientation of the Bulgarian nationhood discourse from the past to both present and future, the prime minister emphasized the role of the signifier of ‘Europe’ for overcoming Bulgaria’s obsession with the Macedonian narrative. Repositioning the narrative from the distant past (and the signifiers of national tragedy and loss associated with it) to the beginning of the inter-state dialogue between Bulgaria and Macedonia (Bulgaria’s recognition of Macedonian independent statehood), made possible

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<sup>560</sup> Press conference by the economic ministers Valentin Vassilev and Nikola Gruevski, Sofia, 9<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>561</sup> Ivan Kostov, Prime Minister at the celebratory plenary session of Bulgarian parliament on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

as a result of this re-orientation, is what enabled the non-conflictual re-interpretation of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations:

*“The governments of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia reached an agreement [as] a natural consequence of the historical fact that Bulgaria first recognized the independence of the Republic of Macedonia.”<sup>562</sup>*

Framed within the discourse of ‘Europe’, this chronological re-positioning of the historical dependency of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations increased its legitimacy:

*“[...] the two states found a way to begin to speak in the language of United Europe, the language of friendship, of understanding, of tolerance and of mutual respect [...]. This is Bulgaria’s piece of European news.”<sup>563</sup>*

Establishing the equivalence between behaviour guided by the norms of Europe (‘to speak the language of [...] Europe’) and the moral categories characterizing a relationship of friendship attempts to discursively delegitimize the conflictuality in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations. Emphasizing the breakthrough which such amity marks (‘piece of [...] news’) and labelling it as ‘European’ rhetorically articulates the meaning of the event as a success.

This notion is re-enforced by the overexposed declarations of approval coming from domestic and international sources of authority. The foreign minister defines the decision as a ‘sign of civility and European behaviour’<sup>564</sup>. The chairman of the foreign policy committee in parliament salutes the ‘remarkable consensus on un-blocking the relations with Macedonia’<sup>565</sup>. The president also lends his absolute support for the reached agreement by confirming he has been part of the efforts that led to it:

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<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>564</sup> Nadezhda Mihailova at the Committee for International and Integration Policy quoted by Demokratsia newspaper of 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>565</sup> Assen Agov at the Committee for International and Integration Policy quoted by Demokratsia newspaper of 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.



*"[...] this issue is about to be closed in an extremely satisfactory manner for both sides, keeping the dignity of both Bulgaria and Macedonia. This opens an avenue for pragmatically resolving all problems that stand between us."*<sup>566</sup>

Linking the resolution of the dispute to the notion of pragmatic politics is a discursive strategy for emphasizing its compatibility with the national interests of Bulgaria. The explicit confirmation that Bulgaria's dignity as a sovereign state has not been affected in the bilateral compromise re-enforces this idea and demonstrates that a new interpretation of what represents 'Bulgarian-ness' has occurred.

Framed within the positive signifiers of European-ness, publicized external approval adds legitimacy to the policy of rapprochement with Macedonia and serves the purpose of neutralizing nationalist arguments against it.

*"Obviously, the two states managed to [...] overcome history. This is [...] a European approach to solving the problems. [...] The agreement between Bulgaria and Macedonia is truly a European solution."*<sup>567</sup>

Associating the decreased salience of historical narratives with European-ness ('European approach', 'European solution') indicates the re-orientation required of Bulgaria in its interpretation of Bulgarian-ness. Detaching the national identity narratives from their focus on the past and re-orienting them instead to the present and future is what enabled the 'overcoming of history'. At the same time, the modified interpretation of Bulgarian-ness retains familiar signifiers of national identity which preserve the credibility of the nationhood narratives. This is illustrated by the emphasis on the significance of Bulgaria's new policy on Macedonia for the stability of the Balkans:

*"Bulgaria did a lot to contribute for stabilizing the region. [...] What the Prime Minister just announced will additionally help improve the future stability of the Balkans."*<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> President Petar Stoyanov quoted in Demokratsia newspaper of 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>567</sup> Avis Bowlen, US Ambassador to Bulgaria, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>568</sup> Peter Metzger, Germany's Ambassador to Bulgaria, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999, BTA Courier Service.

Bulgaria's traditional signifier of purpose – the role of the state as a factor of stability on the Balkans – is being highlighted to help accomplish the discursive move from narrating Bulgarian national identity within nationalist discourse to narrating it within 'Europe' without losing credibility. The fact that recognition for this Bulgarian role comes from 'Europe'<sup>569</sup> increases its discursive significance.

The same purpose serves the immediate rhetorical link established with the notion of national interest:

*"Having succeeded in finding a common language again with Macedonia, there will be no barriers in front of us to stop us from speaking it in the name of the national interests and the national ideals, which should be our only guide in our service."*<sup>570</sup>

Linking the 'Europeanization' of relations with Macedonia back to the notion of national interest is meant to confirm its compatibility with the identity construct of Bulgarian nationhood: it is being emphasized that both the 'national interests' and the 'national ideals' are upheld in an improved dialogue with Macedonia.

The change in the official discourse on Macedonia is illustrative of the transformation in identity narratives which had occurred in the course of transition. In view of Bulgaria's new political priorities and policy goals and its gradual progress towards Europeanization, the national collectivity needed no longer be constituted around historical narratives of past grandeur and glory. It had a clear perspective for the future which could provide an optimistic, positive source of self-identification: 'returning' to Europe. This is what suggested the decreased political significance of historical narratives about Macedonia and the increased significance of narratives of good neighbourly relations. With important implications for the contents of Bulgarian national identity, the depoliticization of historical narratives on Macedonia produced, eventually, a re-arrangement of the identity pattern and a modified constellation of signifiers. The change is evident in the new interpretation of the national interest: making specific steps in the direction of Europe, one of which is improving relations with neighbouring countries.

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<sup>569</sup> In the face of the German ambassador.

<sup>570</sup> Prime Minister Ivan Kostov at the celebratory plenary session of Bulgarian parliament on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

The particular formula which enabled the improvement of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations was nothing new: it had been discussed previously by the governments of Videnov and of Crvenkovski and had been discarded as unacceptable. Its wording stipulated that the joint declaration between Bulgaria and Macedonia be signed in duplicate copies 'in the official languages of both states: Bulgarian under the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, and Macedonian under the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia'<sup>571</sup>. The fact that the same formula had been seen before as unacceptable is an indicator for the changed political environment which enabled the general consensus in Bulgaria around Macedonia.

It is important to note, however, that the deep sedimentation of Bulgarian narratives on Macedonia did not permit their dislocation from the national discursive space. Even though the language dispute was gradually moved down the political agenda of the state, the interpretations of 'Macedonia' that caused and perpetuated it did not disappear. Because of their historical intertwinement with the narratives of Bulgarian nationhood, they could not be completely removed from the national discursive space. Bulgaria's difficulties in acknowledging the distinctiveness of the Macedonian national language continued to plague narratives on Macedonia. This was particularly visible in the reactions in Bulgaria's right-wing political space to the announced joint declaration:

*"In no case should this be interpreted as recognizing the Macedonian language. [...] I repeat, it does not follow that we recognize such a language on Bulgarian territory and this is clearly formulated."*<sup>572</sup>

The duplicated confirmation that the official position on the nature of the Macedonian language and its use in Bulgaria has not changed attempts to appease the concerns of the nationalists. It also aims to restore the balance in the familiar national identity narrative, which is accomplished through two explanatory interpretations of the joint declaration's language formula. One concerns the practicalities of the political process that led to it. It explains that this formula is a step forward from the proposal of the Macedonian

<sup>571</sup> Text of the Joint Declaration of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia of 1999 available in English at [http://www.bcci.bg/bulgarian/events/decl\\_mac\\_en.htm](http://www.bcci.bg/bulgarian/events/decl_mac_en.htm).

<sup>572</sup> Krasimir Karakachanov, leader of the Bulgarian VMRO in an interview for Demokratsia newspaper, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

government, presumably demanding the unconditional recognition of the Macedonian language.

*“The position of the previous governments in Skopje was very ultimative. It demanded that we recognize the existence of a Macedonian language and that the documents be signed in Bulgarian and Macedonian without any qualifications. [...] The formula now accepted guarantees both our historical interests and our national security in view of any future demands.”<sup>573</sup>*

The statement aims to demonstrate that the national position has been asserted and championed: the reference to ‘historical interests’ and the consideration of ‘national security’ issues confirm this. Transferring political responsibility for past intractability on the issue to Skopje re-enforces the idea that concerted effort has been made and progress has been achieved on behalf of the Bulgarian government, thus highlighting the outcome as a success.

The second interpretation concerns general principles that underlie the new policy. It upholds the idea that pragmatic national policies should not be driven by considerations of history:

*“Historical claims are not the job of politicians. [...] Language and nation, let alone history, are not to be recognized. A nation or a language either exist or not. It would be silly to continue arguing about history.”<sup>574</sup>*

The discursive separation between the historical and the political is the key change in Bulgaria’s rhetoric. Denouncing the political relevance of historical arguments as ‘silly’, the leader of the nationalists attempts to close the dispute without compromising core nationalist assumptions.

The timing of the move is repeatedly justified with the change of power in Macedonia, which aims to re-enforce the idea that Bulgaria’s position has always been amicable:

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<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*

*“Bulgaria has long been ready for this day. Our foreign policy towards Macedonia has always been consistent and tolerant, and the European values are the criterion which we use to solve the contentious issues. This is the language which Europe speaks today. When Skopje began to speak this language, our domestic language dispute became unnecessary.”*<sup>575</sup>

The rhetorical re-alignment of Bulgarian foreign policy with European values essentializes Bulgaria's position and problematizes Macedonia's: the responsibility for the previous freeze in the relationship should be transferred to Macedonia because Bulgaria 'has always been [...] tolerant' and 'European'. In stark contrast with the intransience of Bulgaria's previous official position on Macedonia, this claim represents an attempt for domestication of the discursive transformation which enabled the breakthrough in the relationship. The only voices that contradicted it came, predictably, from the lines of the socialists, now in opposition, who suggested that the solution of the language dispute with Macedonia implied a 'grave compromise'<sup>576</sup> with the Bulgarian national interests. This deviance from the consensual approval for solving the dispute, however, is marginalized as 'nationalism' inadequate to the new 'European' character of Bulgarian politics:

*“[...] whether the socialists will have the courage and resources for a candidly nationalist campaign against the normalization of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations [or not], the damage of such campaign for both Bulgaria and Macedonia would be guaranteed.”*<sup>577</sup>

Contrasting the 'European-ness' of improving bilateral relations against the damages of nationalist politics is the discursive dynamics which enabled overcoming the antagonisms of the past. Associating Bulgaria's prosperous future with Europeanization and articulating amity with Macedonia as the only European option for the progress of bilateral relations facilitated taking the historical narratives on Macedonia off the political agenda and marginalizing them as remnants of the nationalist (communist/socialist) past. This helped

<sup>575</sup> Aneliya Dimitrova, 'Language', commentary in Demokratsia newspaper, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>576</sup> Georgi Daskalov, a leader from Demokratsia newspaper of 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>577</sup> Demokratsia newspaper of 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

initiate a bilateral institutional dialogue which eventually led to negotiating a legitimate solution to the language dispute.

The political narratives around the actual signing of the Joint Declaration between Bulgaria and Macedonia, which put an end to the language dispute, confirm the increased salience of the signifiers of 'European-ness'. 'Respect for European principles in the interaction with partners'<sup>578</sup>, a 'European solution to Balkan problems'<sup>579</sup>, 'saluted' and 'appreciated' by the European Union<sup>580</sup>, are the common approaches to covering the event in the leading media. Even though sceptics criticized the event as a gesture to Europe rather than a gesture to Macedonia, it had important implications both for improving Bulgarian-Macedonian relations and for empowering European discourse. The policies of the new democratic coalition government in Bulgaria were already framed within the context of 'Europe' as a general strategic goal. This facilitated the overall institutional consensus on solving the dispute with Macedonia and enabled the signing of the Joint Declaration, as well as the whole spectrum of subsequent bilateral documents advancing the relations in various sectors. Ranging from economic cooperation (free trade, investment plans, transport links) to cooperation at the level of 'high politics' (defense and security<sup>581</sup>), the joint initiatives opened up the bilateral discursive space for normalized political dialogue. Guided by the signifiers of 'European' behaviour and 'European' values such as trust, tolerance, amity, pragmatism, the progress in the bilateral relations marginalized the discourse of nationalism as detrimental and irrelevant to the many aspects of possible cooperation. In this sense, Europeanization discourse dislocated nationalist discourse as hegemonic in the bilateral relations, in the meantime producing a less antagonistic – and more credible – interpretation of collective state identity.

But while the process of Europeanization in Bulgaria had already achieved several tangible results, which enabled the sustainable empowerment of the 'Europe' discourse over the entire discursive space of Bulgarian politics and facilitated the general institutional

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<sup>578</sup> Demokratsia newspaper 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>580</sup> Demokratsia newspaper, 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>581</sup> Plans for joint military training events, Bulgaria's big donation of military arms and equipment for Macedonia of 1999.

consensus on overcoming the freeze in the bilateral relationship, Macedonia was at a different stage in its efforts for Europeanization. As a result of the delay in international recognition and the continuing domestic problems with minority accommodation, Macedonia had not been able to initiate an institutional dialogue with the EU as early as Bulgaria. By the time Bulgaria was already officially an applicant state (December 1999), Macedonia was about to begin its associated member status negotiations (April 2000). This determined the decreased political relevance of the 'Europe' discourse and its only partial appropriation in the discursive space of Macedonian politics. A domestic political factor also contributed to Macedonia's ambivalence on 'Europe'. While the Bulgarian democratic coalition had replaced the former socialist élite on all institutional positions of leadership, Macedonia was experiencing a deep institutional divide between the presidency (still headed by the solid functionary from Yugoslavian times Gligorov) and the government (already led by the democratic party's leader Georgievski). The clash between the two institutions divided Macedonian politics around key political issues<sup>582</sup> and was displayed in the debates over the advancement of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations. Thus, even though the prime minister and his government upheld the signifiers of 'Europe' to justify their policy towards improving relations with Bulgaria and gain legitimacy for it, the Europeanization discourse was not empowered consensually, as it was in Bulgaria. The salience of nationalist discourse, perpetuated by the socialists around the former Macedonian prime minister Crvenkovski, whose central theme was anti-Bulgarian rhetoric, demonstrates this.

The leadership of the Macedonian socialists claimed that the compromise reached by the two states had been a fatal error. Insisting that the formula of the compromise (signing the documents 'in Macedonian language under the constitution' of Macedonia) limits the Macedonian language to the boundaries of the constitution and does not imply recognition of its existence outside of it, the former Macedonian ambassador to Bulgaria denounced it as 'unacceptable'<sup>583</sup>. He demanded that it be accompanied by an explicit declaration on behalf of Bulgaria recognizing the Macedonian language. Such a

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<sup>582</sup> See the debate between the president and the prime minister at the parliamentary session on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1999, also enquiries at the parliamentary committee on security etc.

<sup>583</sup> Georgi Spasov for Dnevnik newspaper, 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

declaration, already demanded officially by the previous Macedonian government, had obviously not been deemed possible by Bulgaria. Inquiry into the aspects of the agreement that remained contentious between the two states had a destructive effect on the prospects for bilateral cooperation. By insisting on these aspects, the Macedonian socialists attempted to secure popular support by utilizing the salience of nationalist narratives constituting Bulgaria as the threatening Macedonian 'Other'. But despite support from the president<sup>584</sup>, the oppositional voices of the socialists were steadily marginalized, not least because the Albanian minority's political representation, in line with the government, had also subscribed to the discourse of Europeanization as a tool against Macedonian nationalism. The prime minister defended his policy of normalizing relations with Bulgaria by calling upon the realm of commonality which this discourse upheld:

*"Is there a person who could be bothered by normalizing relations between two Balkan states [...] particularly between Macedonia and Bulgaria? [...] Yesterday the European Union expressed support for normalization [...], in the morning Great Britain sent us congratulations for the courage and the manner in which we acted. [...] And instead of being proud [...] that once and forever we overcame this dispute [...], we are now starting all over again to search for problems and faults."*<sup>585</sup>

Juxtaposing the notion of 'normalization' and its universality as a value with the 'abnormality' of conflict, Georgievski emphasizes that 'Europe' is entirely in favour of normalization. Therefore, the ones seeking 'problems and fault' would be the 'abnormal', non-European elements in Macedonian politics. This is a discursive attempt for delegitimizing the dispute and the narratives associated with it, thus justifying the policy of the government as the only legitimate option.

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<sup>584</sup> The new president Trajkovski, who took office in December 1999, came from the lines of the democratic party VMRO-DPMNE.

<sup>585</sup> Ljubco Georgievski at the 12<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1999, 13-14.



*“We do not intend to be in a situation of frozen relations, martial relations, to be constantly threatened. We want security for the Republic of Macedonia. Is there a better example of security than good relations with this [the Bulgarian] state?”<sup>586</sup>*

Transferring improved relations with Bulgaria to the realm of ‘high politics’ (threat and security) highlights their significance and aims to justify the government’s policy of rapprochement. Reversing the familiar Macedonian narrative of Bulgaria as a threat, the prime minister insists that ‘good relations’ with Bulgaria signal the best way to ensure Macedonian security. Bulgaria’s post-declaration donation of military equipment is used as an illustration of this claim<sup>587</sup>:

*“We should once and for all forget about the schemes that somebody will attack us from Bulgaria. Apparently, they are the ones arming us [..]”<sup>588</sup>*

This is a powerful change in the official interpretation of Bulgaria in Macedonian political discourse. Traditionally positioned among the many Balkan enemies of the independent Macedonian state<sup>589</sup> with mainly anti-thetical discursive role, Bulgaria now becomes a partner and amity with Bulgaria begins to signify ‘security’ and ‘normality’. These are key signifiers of the ‘Europe’ discourse in Macedonia and as such they re-align good bilateral relations with Europeanization. This is the dynamics which attempted to marginalize nationalist narratives on Bulgaria, while empowering the Europeanization discourse.

Unlike Bulgaria, Macedonia still needed to see ‘Europe’ as a tangible political prospect of the near future in order to establish general institutional and political consensus on its European option. This had detrimental effect on the hegemony of the discourse of Europeanization in Macedonia. On the issue of resolving the language dispute, the partial empowerment of ‘Europe’ in Macedonian discursive space was complemented by Bulgaria’s determination to demonstrate reconciliatory regional policies in order to facilitate its own integration efforts. This greatly assisted the resolution of a dispute which

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<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>589</sup> The traditional reference is through the allegory of ‘wolves’.

had been initiated in the first place by Bulgaria's intransigence on the issue of language, and determined the amicable outcome.

### ***Europeanization Effects on Identity Narratives of the Language Dispute***

Bulgarian and Macedonian post-communist identities were initially upheld by narratives of the past. This is what determined the stark dependence of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations upon historical antagonisms. Political discourse in both states, however, reflected the inadequacy of such identity constructions in the general silence on the language dispute (Table 11). The gradual marginalization of the former communists in the periphery of state power and the constitution of democratic governments as a definitive break from the past, well into the transition processes, enabled the adaptation of national identity narratives to the political imperatives of the present. Focusing on the opportunities they offered placed bilateral relations on the plane of pragmatic politics and facilitated the marginalization of conflictual interpretations impeding cooperation. Transcending conflictuality was discursively attached to the signifiers of 'Europe', speaking of security, stability and normality. Against the background of strategic re-orientation of national politics towards European integration, this increased the appeal of the new narration of national identity and significantly stabilized the discourse of Europeanization.

<b>State</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>Macedonia</b>
Signifiers upheld by Nationalism	Compromising nationhood	Asserting statehood
	[Silence]	[Silence]
Signifiers upheld by Europeanization	Good relations with neighbours	Normality
	Regional amity, trust and tolerance	National and regional security
	Pragmatic politics, national interest	Pragmatic politics

Table 11. Narratives of the Language Dispute in Bulgaria and Macedonia.

## SECTION III:

## NARRATIVES ON RECOGNIZING NATIONAL MINORITIES

The investigation of national identity narratives determining the discursive position of 'Other' in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations has focused so far on two narrative groups. In the first years of transition it followed transformations of narratives of recognition and post-recognition. From the mid-1990s to the end of the first transitional decade it explored changing narratives of language and the way they facilitated reconciliation of the language dispute. Conditioned by different factors in the two states (domestic political struggles, minority-majority relations, international status, etc.), both narrative groups tend to display similar discursive transformations. First, the general orientation of national identity constructions shifted from past to present and future. This re-orientation helped depoliticize conflictual historical narratives and take them off the urgent political agenda of the state. Second, the boundary between collective 'Self' and 'Other' began to transcend the limits of the national space to include the 'European'. Even though it was delimited by state borders, this dynamics turned 'Europe' into a key signifier of the national and significantly increased the realm of commonality between the two states. Third, political priority began to be determined more by pragmatic rather than ideational interpretations of 'interest'. This helped avoid conflictual formulations of principle and concentrated the bilateral relations on the possibilities for mutually beneficial cooperation. Overall, these discursive transformations increased the credibility of national identity narration by adapting it to the changing political imperatives, and marginalized nationalist interpretations. They also stabilized the discourse of Europeanization as providing a positive and optimistic reading of national identity narratives.

The salience of the two narrative groups increased in two different points in time. Recognition became an issue at the very beginning of transition while language was problematized towards the middle of the first transitional decade. Narrative transformations reflect this chronological difference because it is related to different degrees of salience of the Europeanization discourse. While in 1991 'Europe' was merely a

distant promise, an idea that had little immediate political relevance in the context of utmost insecurity created by the regime changes, in 1999 it was already a foreseeable political prospect. The discursive power of its signifiers was gradually increasing as a result of the more visible relevance of Europeanization. Therefore, articulating national identity through it seemed to have become easier over time. Tracing the transformations of another narrative group – narratives on national minorities – whose salience was greatest in the period of the late transition, helps fully grasp the logic of this discursive dynamics.

Inextricable from the historical narratives of nationhood, the issue of national minorities at home and abroad defined one of the central lines of conflictuality in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations. Shaped by antagonistic interpretations of 'Other', the stand on minorities in the two states differed in view of the different identity patterns and the different interpretation of the signifier of nationhood.

Building on its central interpretation of national unity, Bulgaria rejected the notion of 'national minority' all together. In the legal framework for protection of minorities, the state operationalized the term 'ethnic minorities' and treated their members as Bulgarians of different ethnic origin. This interpretation upheld the monolithic character of Bulgarian national identity, at the same time granting the necessary protection. Short of collective political rights, which were unconstitutional under Bulgarian legislation<sup>590</sup>, these minorities enjoyed the full spectrum of minority rights. The ethnic accommodation model negotiated at the beginning of Bulgaria's transition to democracy provided the rules for sufficient political participation of the largest minority group, the Turks, so there had been no further political imperatives for re-thinking the framework. Externally, Bulgaria had no consistent policy toward its minority communities in neighbouring states but had a specific position on Macedonia. Because of the historical interpretation of 'Macedonia' as part of the Bulgarian nationhood narrative, the common story was that of Serbization and communization of the originally Bulgarian national identity of the people living in

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<sup>590</sup> See Art. 11, Para 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Macedonia.<sup>591</sup> Where these processes had failed, Bulgarian narratives assumed, there were still people professing their 'original' Bulgarian consciousness, despite the threat of repressions. Bulgaria's official position was that of encouraging this presumed target group and protesting against Macedonia's repressive policies. But it did not demand special minority status, because recognition of a Bulgarian minority in Macedonia would imply the clear distinction between the Bulgarian nation and the Macedonian nation. Bulgaria was far from adopting this position.

Macedonia took a much more clearly defined stand on national minorities. In view of the complex processes of inter-ethnic negotiations and the active participation of the sizeable Albanian minority in the political processes of transition, the notion of 'national minorities' became a permanent part of Macedonian national identity narratives. Accommodated through the formula of national tolerance, it secured a range of cultural and political rights for all minority groups on the territory of the republic. However, Macedonia never acknowledged either the existence of a Bulgarian minority group or the significance of a Bulgarian element in its national identity construction. Bulgarian presence in Macedonia was re-told as foreign occupation and professing Bulgarian national consciousness was interpreted as a form of treason<sup>592</sup>. In this sense minority protection in Macedonia was never extended to Bulgarian minority groups. But in view of the salience of the signifiers of national territory and the notion of territorial belonging, Macedonia sought to secure it for Macedonian minorities abroad. As already noted, concern for Macedonians living in parts of Macedonia under foreign sovereignty was a high priority foreign policy task and interpreted as one of the state's main external responsibilities. The constitutional provision explicitly stipulating this role confirms this.<sup>593</sup> In the context of Bulgaria's narration of national identity as monolithic and Bulgarian ambiguity on Macedonian nationhood all together, this concern of the Macedonian state was perceived as a

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<sup>591</sup> Link between fostering Macedonian national identity and communist totalitarianism in Yugoslavia, see for an overview of the arguments Veselin Angelov, *Macedonian Question in Bulgarian-Yugoslavian Relations* (Sofia: University St Kliment Ohridski, 2004).

<sup>592</sup> See Ljubco Georgievski, *Facing the Truth*, 9-23.

<sup>593</sup> Art.49 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

particular threat. In Bulgaria it was interpreted as a national security problem<sup>594</sup>. Placing the discussion of minorities on the agenda of security politics in Bulgaria further politicized the minority issue in Macedonia and re-enforced antagonistic narratives on Bulgaria.

It is evident from this that Bulgarian and Macedonian national identity narratives clashed both internally and externally on the issue of national minorities and created one of the most intractable conflictual fields in the bilateral relations. It was maintained by three key narratives: perception of threat against the territorial integrity of the state, incompatibility with the historical narratives of nationhood, and unrecognized minority status and minority protection. These narratives placed the issue of national minorities on the agenda of national and state security policies, which significantly impeded their normalization and de-politicization. With the first positive steps towards Europeanization, the insecurity generated by the complex transition processes began to subside. (Re-)turn to 'Europe' posed particular practical demands on the two states, among them good bilateral relations and a framework for minority protection. This streamlined bilateral relations into the rationality of Europeanization policies and helped take conflictual interpretations off the political agenda. Even though the two states did not agree on a mutually acceptable interpretation of the contentious formulations, they managed to avoid them in their inter-state dialogue, thus reducing their political relevance. Tracing the changed articulations along the three key conflictual narrative lines on national minorities demonstrates the mechanism of this discursive dynamics.

### ***Narratives on National Minorities and the Threat to Territorial Integrity***

Narratives of territorial threat signalled one aspect in which the issue of national minorities affected Bulgarian-Macedonian relations. Their political relevance was linked to the historical references in identity narration and was determined by their conflictual interpretations in the two states. The relations of the Bulgarian communist party with

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<sup>594</sup> As was Macedonia's concern about its minorities under Art.49 seen by Greece: it was stated as one of the reasons for the Greek economic blockade. For an overview of what led to this extreme regional position, see for instance Loring Danforth, 'Claims to Macedonian Identity: the Macedonian Question and the Breakup of Yugoslavia', *Anthropology Today* 9(4), (1993): 3-10.

socialist Yugoslavia of the first decades of communism had brought about a series of rather controversial political campaigns directed at the population of the region of Pirin Macedonia in Bulgaria.<sup>595</sup> Initially they had been aimed at fostering a distinct, Macedonian, identity in line with the warm relations with Josip Broz Tito. After the split between Tito and Stalin<sup>596</sup>, Bulgaria's communist policies had changed course and had declared the Bulgarian character of the region and its population. Eventually the issue had been completely closed, particularly in view of communist historiography's nationalist interpretation of Bulgaria's new history<sup>597</sup> and its tragic narratives on Macedonia. The heated debates at the very beginning of the democratic transition borne by the 'national question' and the need for redress of the repressed Turkish minority did not re-open the issue of the Macedonian minority in Pirin because such minority was not officially recognized<sup>598</sup> and did not have any political voice.<sup>599</sup> It was not until Bulgaria's recognition of Macedonian independence that the issue was placed on the urgent political agenda of the state in view of Macedonia's official concern for its national minorities abroad.

From the very beginning of the formal inter-state relations between Bulgaria and Macedonia, the issue of national minorities was treated with utmost urgency because of its discursive association with the prospect of territorial separatism. The strong link between nation and territory, a classical characteristic of nationalist discourse, formed the justification of Bulgaria's official policy of non-recognition of minority status and minority rights for the contested minority in Pirin Macedonia. The significance of this link is demonstrated in the context of establishing diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and the newly independent Macedonia. Despite Bulgaria's declarative act of international recognition and the pledged support for the former Yugoslav republic, it was almost two years after recognition that it opened an embassy in Macedonia. Indeed, diplomatic relations had already been established, but with more than eight months' delay and at consular level only. When asked by the press why he was delaying his first formal visit to

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<sup>595</sup> Veselin Angelov, *Macedonian Question*.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>597</sup> History of Bulgaria, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Volume 8 (Sofia: GALICO, 1999).

<sup>598</sup> An insignificant number of people had declared that they were of 'Macedonian' ethnic origin in the official censuses, see official information available at <http://www.nsi.bg/Census/Ethnos.htm>.

<sup>599</sup> Roundtable discussions, verbatim reports, 80-81.

Macedonia even though he had received an official invitation, the Bulgarian foreign minister pointed precisely to the claim for recognizing Macedonian national minority and the related 'territorial claims'<sup>600</sup>. Linking minority status to protecting the official territorial borders of the state inevitably placed the discussion of minorities on the agenda of 'high politics' (national security and defense) and prevented its 'normalization'. Taken up by the socialists, this theme became central in narratives on Macedonia for a long time, discursively delegitimizing the possibility of recognizing minority status and excluding it from the political options of the state.

Indeed, Bulgaria's official position never acknowledged a different national identity of the people in Pirin Macedonia other than Bulgarian and refused to discuss their status in terms of minority rights and protection, despite the lack of any reasonable concern for Bulgaria's territorial integrity in view of Macedonia's position<sup>601</sup>. The period of the language dispute re-enforced nationalist interpretations of Macedonian calls for minority protection as a hidden agenda for territorial demands. This is illustrated by the high priority which the matter assumed when Bulgaria's political will for overcoming the language dispute changed. It became the subject of one of the two key provisions which enabled the breakthrough. Together with the formulation on language, Bulgaria's efforts in the negotiations which led to the signing of the 1999 Joint Declaration were focused on securing a guarantee for non-intervention in decisions on the status of Pirin Macedonia and its population. In view of Macedonia's constitutional concern for the fate of Macedonian minority communities under foreign sovereignty, Bulgaria insisted on a provision clarifying its non-application to Bulgaria. Bulgarian demands for such a provision were based on the precedent with Greece but in effect demonstrated political concern at official state level that Macedonia's constitution might be interpreted as the legal basis for intervention in Bulgaria's domestic affairs. The semantic link between territory and nation, pointed to above, is displayed in the very text of the declaration. The provision guaranteeing the lack of territorial demands immediately precedes the provision declaring the non-application of Macedonia's concern under Art.49 of its constitution. The latter is

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<sup>600</sup> Stoyan Ganev quoted in Duma newspaper 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1992.

<sup>601</sup> Macedonia's virtually non-existent for the first half of the 1990s army.



being interpreted in Bulgaria as withdrawal of any claims for the existence of a Macedonian minority:

*“Skopje will not seek a Macedonian minority with us.”*<sup>602</sup>

Securing Macedonia’s official confirmation that there are no territorial aspirations and no intentions of violating the unity and monolithic character of the Bulgarian national construction formed the basis of all future dialogue between the two states. The overall framework of the ‘Europe’ discourse which was pointed to throughout is evidence for its empowerment and the role it played in re-articulating Bulgaria’s own vision of collective ‘Self’.

In Macedonia the link between territorial threat and national minority narratives was based on historical representations of Bulgaria as an occupant force<sup>603</sup>. These narratives had been upheld by key signifiers of Macedonian identity (divided Macedonian land, dispersed Macedonian people) defined against Bulgaria as the immediate foreign ‘Other’. Bulgaria’s act of recognition extending declarative support for the newly independent Macedonian state had not succeeded in dislocating them because of Bulgaria’s ambiguous official position. Even though the new state had been recognized, the Bulgarian president had explicitly declared that recognition did not apply to the Macedonian nation.<sup>604</sup> Within the discourse of Macedonian nationalism, therefore, recognition by Bulgaria had been interpreted as a tool for increasing Bulgarian influence and advancing Bulgarian aspirations towards Macedonia. This interpretation of Bulgaria had not remained completely unchallenged<sup>605</sup> but it had been the most common.<sup>606</sup> Bulgaria’s failure to establish any meaningful institutional dialogue with Macedonia and its subsequent intransience in the language dispute had re-enforced this discursive configuration. This is evidenced by the

<sup>602</sup> Editorial headline, *Demokratsia* newspaper from 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>603</sup> Parliament plenary session on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug 1992, 27, on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct 1992, 80 etc.

<sup>604</sup> Zhelev, *In Spite of It All*.

<sup>605</sup> Plenary session of the Macedonian parliament on 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1992, 89 for a reference questioning the fact that Bulgaria’s position is not reported as a positive outcome; *Ibid.*, 90 for an attempt to appeal for leaving the past behind; *Ibid.*, 104-111 for a reference to Bulgaria as ‘a friend’, etc.

<sup>606</sup> President Gligorov would not visit Bulgaria to avoid being called ‘bugarash’, Georgievski’s visit to Sofia was regarded as ‘highly suspicious’ – see plenary session on 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1992, 86-88.

absent or consistently negative reporting on Bulgaria in the Macedonian media.<sup>607</sup> In this sense the breakthrough in the language dispute was a positive outcome for transgressing the boundary of threatening 'otherness' in the simple fact that it permitted the initiation of inter-state dialogue with official Bulgaria. Placing the relationship between the two states on the plane of the pragmatic politics of cooperation allowed opening up Macedonia's discursive space for alternative narratives on Bulgaria.

As a result of the positive outcome of the language negotiations and in preparation of the official visit of the Macedonian prime minister to Bulgaria, Macedonia requested military support in military equipment and weapons<sup>608</sup> which Bulgaria granted. Among the list of cooperation initiatives and bilateral agreements<sup>609</sup>, a Bulgarian donation of 150 tanks and 142 artillery guns was formally announced<sup>610</sup>. Against the state of the Macedonian army at the time (4 actual tanks<sup>611</sup>), the donation was evaluated in Macedonia as 'an exceptional gesture on behalf of the Bulgarian government' and 'the strongest proof of the existing trust between the two states'.<sup>612</sup> The signifiers of amity ('an exceptional gesture', 'existing trust') are a novelty in Macedonian narratives on Bulgaria. Unsurprisingly, they were questioned in the Macedonian parliament<sup>613</sup>. In defense of the policies of his government, the prime minister challenges the sedimentation of narratives constituting Bulgaria as a threat. Pointing to the link between the politics of the past and the interpretation of Bulgaria as the ultimate enemy, both in the communist regime of the federation and in the socialist government of the early transition period<sup>614</sup>, Georgievski attempts to demonstrate the political irrelevance of such interpretation and discredit its logic. On this basis is his call for a change:

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<sup>607</sup> See for instance Puls newspaper (NIP Nova Makedonija) 1992-1996 in their column dedicated on Bulgaria.

<sup>608</sup> A standard request of the democratic Macedonian government in its contacts with NATO member states and in other contacts abroad, given the fact that the retreat of the Yugoslav army left the republic in severe shortage of military equipment.

<sup>609</sup> 23 by the official announcement of MFA Bulgaria at <http://www.mfa.bg/en/news/>.

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>611</sup> According to Georgievski at the press conference in Sofia, 22 Feb 1999, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>613</sup> In a hearing by the Macedonian president Gligorov who claims he had 'no knowledge of the donation', albeit he was Commander-In-Charge of the Macedonian army, see parliamentary session on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>614</sup> Georgievski, parliamentary session on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1999, 14.

*"We should once and for all discard this conspiracy theory that somebody should always attack us from Bulgaria. [...] Again and again we find ourselves in a situation when we are inventing problems with Bulgaria. It is a new problem every time. [...] Honestly, I do not understand this frustration of ours with regard to Bulgaria."*<sup>615</sup>

Defining Macedonia's obsession with the threat from Bulgaria as the irrational expression of a bothered identity ('conspiracy theory', 'frustration'), the prime minister uncovers its 'invented' nature and denounces it. Against its irrationality he places rational considerations of classical realist national interest:

*"If somebody gives you weapons in such quantities, [...] this, not lastly, proves that they are not planning a military aggression against you. [...] An arm, which we have all the time thought of as the enemy, gives us weapons. What is the problem with that? [...] Is there greater security for us [than this]?"*<sup>616</sup>

Rhetorically demonstrating the lack of rationality and logic behind constituting Bulgaria as a threat in the context of the Bulgarian military donation, Georgievski successfully challenges the sedimentation of the narratives of animosity and opens up discursive space for positive interpretations of Macedonia's relations with Bulgaria. Even though Macedonia's progress in the process of Europeanization was still in its very early stages, the signifiers of 'Europe' were called upon to justify the relevance of such policy:

*"I believe that we will be able to demonstrate what Europe wants from us [...] What we are doing now is the impossible, trying to re-open the document [Agenda 2000] and see whether we can be included somehow, by good will. [...] [T]he strategic interests of this state will remain the same [...] [guided] by the principles and rules of European democracy."*<sup>617</sup>

This discursive strategy is confirmed by the vice minister of foreign affairs and future president of Macedonia Trajkovski:

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<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

*"We demonstrated the political will to overcome the past. The place of the past is in history, and we should be looking into the future. [...] We spoke to each other under the standards of Europe, I would like us to move from being in the periphery of Europe to becoming part of it."*<sup>618</sup>

In line with the prime minister's rhetoric, Trajkovski repeats the association of antagonism with the past, thus confirming its irrelevance for the political present ('the place of the past is in history'). The signifiers of dialogue, understanding, good will ('spoke to each other', 'demonstrated the will') are, in contrast, associated with the future and its normative correctness ('we should'). By outlining the clear direction of this future (from the periphery to the heart of Europe), the vice minister indicates the desired change in Macedonia's identity: living up to 'the standards of Europe'. It is the ambition and appeal of European-ness that encouraged putting the past behind, together with the antagonisms which it had nourished.

### ***National Minorities and Narrating Nationhood***

While taking the concern for the state's territorial integrity off the agenda of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, the resumed dialogue between Bulgaria and Macedonia brought back to the fore antagonisms caused by divergent interpretations of nationhood in the narratives on minority communities at home and abroad. The central clash was pre-determined by Bulgaria's insistence on a monolithic nation and Macedonia's comfortable accommodation of the idea of national minorities.

The incompatibility of the notion of 'national' minority with the Bulgarian narration of nationhood was asserted at many levels. Even when ratifying the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities<sup>619</sup>, Bulgaria did so upon the reservation that it had no national minorities<sup>620</sup>. Ratification was meant more as a

<sup>618</sup> Boris Trajkovski, Sofia 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>619</sup> 1999, 7<sup>th</sup> May.

<sup>620</sup> See Bulgarian reservation at

<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeDeclarations.asp?CL=ENG&NT=157&VL=1> plus

gesture of good will and participation in the common European processes rather than an active legal framework for minority protection. This interpretation of nationhood was complemented by Bulgarian narratives on Macedonia positioning it as an element of its own identity (ethnic, cultural, political, territorial, national). On the basis of it, Bulgaria expected a political relationship defined along the lines of 'brotherhood'<sup>621</sup> but also a clear order of superiority for its own position. This interpretation made the issue of Macedonian minorities politically irrelevant and even offensive. Macedonia's refusal to comply with it and acknowledge the element of commonality provoked Bulgaria's alienation and frustration, since re-constructing Macedonia as a foreign 'Other' would also imply re-constructing the image of 'Self'. As a consequence Bulgaria resorted to narratives of a prodigal brother, lost but still loved from afar.<sup>622</sup>

Macedonia, on the other hand, had positioned Bulgaria precisely as the constitutive 'Other' in narrating its own story of difference. Together with the other antagonists of Macedonian 'Self-hood', Bulgaria was expected to either encroach upon or accept it, but was not permitted to participate in it. In the Macedonian interpretation of nationhood, the issue of minorities was not only politically relevant but indispensable to establishing any meaningful inter-state dialogue with Bulgaria. It could not be marginalized because its regulation indicated that the dialogue was being held from a position of equality: two distinct nations. Bulgaria's refusal to communicate on this basis and even acknowledge its relevance alienated Macedonia even further and helped re-enforce the narrative construction of Bulgaria in terms of encroaching 'otherness'. This is why Macedonia explicitly rejected the 'brotherhood' narratives and insisted that the relationship was one of enmity, reflecting this in its position on national minorities at home and abroad.

Thus, the antagonization of nationhood narratives had serious impact on intra- and international relations in Bulgaria and Macedonia. The breakthrough in the language dispute did improve dialogue between the two states by placing their relations in a realm of

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parliamentarian and jurist Lyuben Kornezov's special opinion of 'legal absurdity' of the document, interview Duma newspaper of 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>621</sup> As systematic references to Macedonia as 'brothers' suggest.

<sup>622</sup> 'In the end, we are brothers' – 27<sup>th</sup> May 1992 Demokratsia newspaper, 'Seeing Macedonia is like meeting a loved relative whom you have expected for years', 'Macedonia, our beautiful nostalgia' – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1992 Demokratsia newspaper, etc.

commonality – Europeanization.<sup>623</sup> But it did not significantly alter narratives of nationhood determining the two states' positions on the minority issue. Their modification required concerted political effort and took time because they formed part of the history of the national 'Self'. What the initiation of bilateral dialogue within the discourse of Europeanization did was distance the formulation of policy from the interpretation of history.

The key sign of this change is the official rhetorical dissociation from historical narratives by ascribing their validity to the realm of the sciences, not politics. As early as the mid-1990s an improvement in the blocked relations was related to leaving the 'historical definition of national identity [to] the scientists',<sup>624</sup> Around the time of the negotiations on the joint declaration of 1999, the notion of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* designated the process as a success both domestically and internationally.<sup>625</sup> The imperatives of bilateral cooperation as an indicator of normalization and, consequently, Europeanization sidetracked concerns about history and took them off the immediate political agenda of inter-state dialogue.

Obviously, the deep sedimentation of narratives of nationhood did not permit their removal from political discourse all together. They continued to be present in everyday politics even though they were no longer reflected in the official position of the state. In Bulgaria this was demonstrated in the political rhetoric surrounding the activities of various pro-Macedonian cultural and political organizations domestically. In Macedonia it was voiced in the concerns about surrendering the interests of the Macedonian nation through improving relations with Bulgaria. The text of the joint declaration limiting the Macedonian constitutional provision about care for minority communities abroad was interpreted as a limitation to one of the key responsibilities of the state in terms of protecting national identity abroad:

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<sup>623</sup> Ivan Krastev, 'Bulgaria Cut Its 'Macedonian' Knot', interview for Capital newspaper of 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>624</sup> Parvanov, interview for Puls newspaper, *ibid*.

<sup>625</sup> Boris Trajkovski, Sofia 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999, BTA, Krasimir Karakachanov, interview for Demokratsia newspaper of 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999, Kostov and Georgievski at the press conference in Sofia, 22 Feb 1999, BTA Courier Service.

*“Macedonia is to enter a period of uncertainty [which is suggested by] the indications of renouncing the Macedonian language and the Macedonian minority in the Republic of Bulgaria, its statements of the factual non-existence of the Macedonian nation, etc.”<sup>626</sup>*

The attempt for re-securitization (‘a period of uncertainty’) of the issues of language, minorities, nationhood in view of renewed relations with Bulgaria is indicative of the non-fixed character of the newly established frame for dialogue. Agreements with Bulgaria could still be interpreted as a threat to Macedonian national interests and identity (‘giving up our constitutional responsibilities’, ‘a step towards abandoning our compatriots in Bulgaria’, ‘a recognition that the Macedonian language is only a language under our constitution’<sup>627</sup>). These interpretations are related to the instability of the ‘Europe’ discourse in Macedonia: the first tentative steps in the process of Europeanization had not been sufficient to establish a stable institutional and political consensus on Europeanization as the leading strategic goal of Macedonian politics.

*“Should Macedonia have been so clever as to become Europe’s experimental dough, a test zeppelin for somebody’s questionable visions of re-organizing international order?”<sup>628</sup>*

Putting to doubt the rationality of Macedonian policies in view of complying with European rules about international behaviour illustrates Macedonia’s ambiguity about Europe. The suggested loss of identity (‘experimental dough’) and lack of clear ethical trajectory (‘a test zeppelin’) indicate the most common avenues which this ambiguity took.

But even though present in political discourse, these interpretations no longer appeared as the official position of the state. In its formal communication with Bulgaria, Macedonia adhered strictly to the Europeanization discourse, which opened and maintained a realm of commonality with Bulgaria. It is this discursive realm that enabled the initiation of inter-state dialogue all together. With the progress of the process of Europeanization in both

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<sup>626</sup> Plenary session on 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1999.

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid.*, Ilinka Mitreva, 30.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid.*

states, commonality between the two states stabilized and expanded, which further marginalized conflictual interpretations as incompatible with it.

Similar dynamics is noticeable in Bulgaria where the empowerment of the 'Europe' discourse was accelerated by Bulgaria's earlier progress in the process of Europeanization. The opposition against the proposed Bill for Regional Development in Bulgarian parliament, in its section on trans-border cooperation between municipalities in Bulgaria and Macedonia, for example, is counter-attacked by a consistent argument in favour of European practices:

*"We need to demonstrate we are working for regional development so that Europe can look at us with fresh eyes"<sup>629</sup>, "The European Charter for Trans-border Cooperation, which we ratified: [...] this is how Europe has regulated this [field]. [...] In Europe and in the normal world in general, things are being done this way"<sup>630</sup>, "We need to be in line with the European criteria."<sup>631</sup>*

The vice-prime minister re-enforces the power of this line of argumentation by attaching it to the notion of 'national interest' and 'patriotism':

*"I do not think that there exists a Bulgarian with national pride and patriotism who would be ashamed of what we are doing to open the borders with neighbouring states and turn them into an open door between us [...] and Macedonia."<sup>632</sup>*

Emphasizing the compatibility of the European norm with the notions of 'national pride and patriotism' has been central in empowering the discourse of 'Europe', particularly with regard to improving relations with Macedonia. The above statements illustrate how the 'Europe' discourse was utilized to transgress the constraints of national space and attach the notion of national interest to a realm of commonality which included Macedonia as an immediate 'Other'.

<sup>629</sup> Petar Mutafovchiev, Democratic Left, plenary session on 5<sup>th</sup> Mar 1999.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*, Iliyan Popov, Union of Democratic Forces.

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*, Todor Kostadinov.

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*, Vice-Prime Minister Evgeni Bakyrzhiev in a response to enquiry by George Ganchev.



## ***Narratives on National Minorities, Collective Minority Rights and Political Representation***

Marginalizing conflictual narratives of nationhood as pertaining to the realm of science and thus irrelevant to the political, however, proved more challenging when it came to the official state policy on minority status, minority protection and minority rights. Even though the official positions of the two states confirmed the political will to detach policies from mutually exclusive historical interpretations, they found it hard to reflect these positions into their domestic policies when faced with contentious minority demands. Against the background of progressing Europeanization and narratives of good bilateral relations and cooperation, the minority issue was taken off the agenda of foreign policy. A turning point in this sense was the 1999 Joint Declaration which confirmed political will in the two states to overcome all sources of tension, including the ones related to the area of minority issues. Several of the text's provisions, among them renouncing the separatist appeals of public or private subjects, the attempts for intervention in the domestic affairs of the other, and negative propaganda, aimed to normalize this policy area.<sup>633</sup> Indeed, conflictual minority issues gradually ceased to appear as an object of official bilateral dialogue between Bulgaria and Macedonia. But they continued to plague discursive spaces of domestic politics in both states even after the declaration.

Ultimately, the conflict revolved around the issue of minorities' collective rights and political representation. In general, the two states had legitimate minority policies towards other minority groups and as a rule had granted them extensive minority protection. But they were reluctant to treat each other's minorities in the same way. In view of divergent historical interpretations of the national 'Other', these positions are unsurprising. But in the context of bilateral rapprochement they began to stand out as an aberration. Identifying various minority demands and the ways they were channelled in the two states

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<sup>633</sup> See text of the Joint Declaration, Art.11 and following provisions at [http://www.bcci.bg/bulgarian/events/decl\\_mac\\_en.htm](http://www.bcci.bg/bulgarian/events/decl_mac_en.htm).

reveals the mechanism of accommodation of minority narratives into the changing context of Europeanization.

Shortly after the beginning of Bulgaria's transition the public presence of representatives of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria was made known through various registered organizations and formations. They ranged from cultural and educational associations<sup>634</sup> to political parties. But while the organization and functioning of the various cultural associations (through public activities, publications, etc.) was understood as part of the process of democratization, the registration of political parties was seen as more problematic. This was partly related to Bulgaria's legislative framework (the constitutional provision prohibiting the organization of political parties along ethnic lines, the protection of the territorial integrity of the state and considerations of national security). Legislative considerations, however, were not decisive: there were ways to abide by them and still provide minority political representation, which is illustrated by the active participation of the party of the ethnic Turks in Bulgarian political life. What played decisive role in the problematization of Macedonian minority party representation in Bulgaria were political considerations. It was associated with the political taboo on discussions of separatism and distinct national identification, in view of the salience of territorial integrity and national unity in the narration of Bulgaria's national identity. This is demonstrated in the nuanced attitude towards the different Macedonian organizations.

Generally, Macedonian organizations in Bulgaria, and specifically political parties, can be divided in two groups: pro-Bulgarian and pro-Macedonian.<sup>635</sup> The former claimed to represent the Macedonian minority as 'Bulgarians from the region of Macedonia and nothing else'<sup>636</sup>. In their view, 'recognizing the Macedonian nation [...] is a juridical absurd'<sup>637</sup>. The latter group claimed to represent the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria as part of the Macedonian nation in the Republic of Macedonia and in the rest of the

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<sup>634</sup> All Bulgarian Union 'Macedonia', Union of the Macedonian Cultural and Educational Associations, Macedonian Scientific Institute.

<sup>635</sup> Summary by Dolores Arsenova, 'Ethno-centric Formations in Bulgaria and Macedonia: an Object of Inter-State Consensus', *Archive Bulgaria-Macedonia, Challenges of Transition* (Sofia: 2001) at <http://www.balkans21.org/arhiv/dolores6.htm>.

<sup>636</sup> Valentin Kitanov, Executive Committee of UMRO-SMD for Trud newspaper from 31<sup>st</sup> Aug 1993.

<sup>637</sup> Stoyan Boyadzhiev, Chariman of UMRO-SDM for Demokratsia newspaper, 2<sup>nd</sup> Aug 1994.

Macedonian region. They wanted 'to unite all Macedonians from Aegean, Albanian, Vardar and Pirin Macedonia and their descendants living in Bulgaria'<sup>638</sup>. Unsurprisingly, the pro-Bulgarian group found it easier to make a permanent place for itself in the official Bulgarian political space. It was organized around the UMRO formation<sup>639</sup> and declared its political presence as early as 1990. The majority of the demands it formulated under its programme were met almost immediately in the early 1990s<sup>640</sup>, among them to re-open the Macedonian Scientific Institute, to re-new the activities of the Macedonian associations for culture and education, to restitute their property, etc.<sup>641</sup> In 1997 they even came to power as a coalition partner in the Kostov government of the United Democratic Forces. In the course of Europeanization processes their active participation in formal politics forced them to adapt.<sup>642</sup> On the one hand, they re-dressed their overt nationalist, and particularly anti-Macedonian, rhetoric in the guise of patriotism: 'do not impinge on patriotism in the history textbooks'<sup>643</sup>. On the other hand, they shifted the focus of their political efforts from the realm of bilateral relations (anti-Macedonianism in Macedonia) to the realm of domestic politics (pro-Macedonianism in Bulgaria), and their negative charge to positive. This is illustrated, for example, by abandoning the attention to confirming the 'actual' large numbers of the ethnic Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia<sup>644</sup> in favour of concentrating on the Macedonian representation within the limits of Bulgaria<sup>645</sup>.

Accommodating the pro-Macedonian group of political parties in Bulgaria's legitimate political space proved more problematic, particularly in view of Bulgarian-Macedonian conflictual relations of the 1990s. The more moderate formations among them, such as the UMRO-Traditional Macedonian Organization 'Ilinden'<sup>646</sup>, were better tolerated. Their formal registration as political parties was facilitated by the explicit declaration that the

<sup>638</sup> Art.1 of the Statute of UMRO-TMO Ilinden (independent) headed by George Solunski.

<sup>639</sup> One of the many who claimed ownership over the name.

<sup>640</sup> Programme Declaration of the Union of the Macedonian Cultural and Educational Associations published by BTA 10<sup>th</sup> Sep 1990, BTA Courier Service.

<sup>641</sup> The only one of their principal demands which could not be met was the return of the sarcophagus with the remains of the revolutionary Gotse Delchev, which is kept in Skopje, see Arsenova, 'Ethno-centric Formations'.

<sup>642</sup> Dynamics confirmed in the study by Arsenova, *ibid*.

<sup>643</sup> Krasimir Karakachanov in 24 Hours newspaper, 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 1999.

<sup>644</sup> Karakachanov in Standard newspaper from 31<sup>st</sup> Aug 1993.

<sup>645</sup> Karakachanov in 24 hours newspaper, 23<sup>rd</sup> Sep 1999.

<sup>646</sup> Led by George Solunski.

organization ‘does not stake any territorial claims’<sup>647</sup> and does not aim to harm ‘the territorial integrity of the state’<sup>648</sup>. The party never had any electoral significance due to the negligible number of its supporters<sup>649</sup> and it did not attract any extraordinary political attention (due to its moderate programme), even though it existed for the best part of the 1990s. This is unlike the extreme pro-Macedonian political party UMO ‘Ilinden’<sup>650</sup>. It staked its claims for political relevance as early as 1990, declaring that it represented the ‘numerous’ Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. According to its articles of association and its programme, it aimed to ‘unite all Macedonians in Bulgaria on a regional and cultural basis’ and to achieve ‘the recognition of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria’, as well as to work for the ‘political development of Macedonia’<sup>651</sup>. And while these aims did not represent any unambiguous threat, the political rhetoric of its leaders made clear the extremist platform of the party:

*“You [Bulgaria] cut off Pirin Macedonia and annexed it. The other two parts of Macedonia you sold to the Serbs and the Greeks. You are separatists and your separatism needs to be corrected now.”*<sup>652</sup>

Its registration was, predictably, refused in subsequent court judgements of 1990 and 1991, where the courts found that the association’s aims were ‘directed against the unity of the nation’, that it ‘advocated national and ethnic hatred’, and that it was ‘dangerous for the territorial integrity of Bulgaria’.<sup>653</sup> It is interesting to note that, much like the Albanian minority in Macedonia, the pro-Macedonian activists in Bulgaria sought to capture the signifiers of ‘Europe’ for the purposes of their own cause:

<sup>647</sup> Art.22 of the Statutes, Archive Ethno-sociology of the Central Party Archive, Vol.4.

<sup>648</sup> Platform-Declaration from 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 1989, Archive Ethno-sociology of the Central Party Archive, Vol.4.

<sup>649</sup> Arsenova, *ibid.*

<sup>650</sup> Led by Yordan Kostadinov.

<sup>651</sup> ‘Stankov and the United Macedonian Organisation Ilinden v. Bulgaria’, nos. 29221/95 and 29225/95, §§ 10-14, ECHR 2001-IX.

<sup>652</sup> Yordan Kostadinov, interview for Continent newspaper from 25th Apr 1995.

<sup>653</sup> ‘Case of the United Macedonian Organization Ilinden – PIRIN and Others v. Bulgaria (Application no. 59489/00).

*“Europe should unite Macedonia in the future so that there be peace on the Balkans.”*<sup>654</sup>

Linking unification of Macedonia with peace on the Balkans reveals a political agenda not necessarily compatible with the processes of Europeanization. It is significant, nevertheless, that it is the discourse of ‘Europe’ that is being utilized to counteract the majority’s nationalist discourse<sup>655</sup>. In the context of hegemonic nationalism in the early years of transition, however, and in view of the general extremist rhetoric of the political party, its existence was found inadmissible by the government, the law, and the general public. It did, however, acquire significant media presence, which notably politicized the issue of political representation of the Macedonian minority.

Unable to achieve a legitimate political status, the organization split in 1994 when the more moderate activists<sup>656</sup> founded their own party – UMO ‘Ilinden-PIRIN’. The activity of this organization marked a peak in the politicization of the issue of Macedonian minority representation in Bulgaria.<sup>657</sup> After amending its founding statutes, which the Sofia City Court<sup>658</sup> had found in conflict with Art.44 (2) of the constitution<sup>659</sup>, the UMO ‘Ilinden-PIRIN’ was formally registered as a political party in the early 1999. Successful registration allowed it to run in the following local government elections and win two mayorships and three seats for municipal councillors in the Pirin Macedonia region.<sup>660</sup> This was significant, because it created the context for normalization of the issue of Macedonian minority representation by attaching it to the processes of democratic representation. Against the general bilateral rapprochement between Bulgaria and Macedonia, initiated with the closure of the language dispute, this was an indication for the good political will to implement the declared principles of amity in Bulgarian domestic politics. It was also in line with Bulgaria’s progress in the processes of Europeanization.

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<sup>654</sup> Yordan Kostadinov, interview for Continent newspaper from 25th Apr 1995.

<sup>655</sup> In a way similar to the Albanian demands in Macedonia.

<sup>656</sup> Around Ivan Singartiyski.

<sup>657</sup> References to key public arguments by Information Agency Focus News 25th Jul 2006, Archive Service.

<sup>658</sup> The legal institution with jurisdiction over the registration of political parties in Bulgaria.

<sup>659</sup> Prohibiting organizations whose activity is aimed against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the unity of the nation, instigating ethnic or national hatred, etc.

<sup>660</sup> In Gotsedelchevsko, according to BTA, 25<sup>th</sup> Oct 1999.

Seized by 61 members of parliament of various political backgrounds, however, Bulgaria's Constitutional Court issued a judgement in 2000, proclaiming the political party unconstitutional under Art.44(2) of the constitution. In its ruling, the Court treated the UMO 'Ilinden-PIRIN' party as a descendent of the extremist UMO 'Ilinden' and took into consideration not its official statutes but the activities of its leaders, including under the umbrella of the banned party. Even though there was evidence for such argumentation, the suggestion that the final decision of the Court was influenced by political rather than juridical reasons, could not be avoided. Invocation of Art.44(2) suggests a serious threat to national security. The actual political significance of the UMO 'Ilinden-PIRIN' party, however, was negligible, as demonstrated in its electoral performance: it won 0.03% of votes which equals approximately 2500 people.<sup>661</sup> This, together with the fact that the party upheld a very moderate platform and maintained its activity within the limits of the law, indicated that there was little evidence of an actual threat to the national security of the state. The interpretation of conflict with Art.44(2) was based on discussion, not actions for subversion, of the territorial borders of the state.<sup>662</sup> a subject taboo in Bulgarian political and public space in view of the salience of the territorial integrity signifier of national identity. In fact, public debate on the existing territorial borders of a state are a fully legitimate subject in any democratic society and Bulgarian primary legislation provides for the possibility of changing them through a parliamentary decision for ratification of an international treaty<sup>663</sup>. Therefore, it was not so much legal but political argumentation which motivated the constitutional court's ban. Despite the partial dislocation of the Bulgarian discourse of nationalism, it was the salience of its signifiers which apparently influenced the constitutional judgement.

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<sup>661</sup> Momchil Milev, 'Theory of Macedonian Conspiracy' in Capital newspaper of 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar 2000 at [http://www.capital.bg/politika\\_i\\_ikonomika/bulgaria/2000/03/03/254626\\_teoriia\\_na\\_makedonskata\\_konspiraciia/](http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/bulgaria/2000/03/03/254626_teoriia_na_makedonskata_konspiraciia/).

<sup>662</sup> Based on a letter by Kiril Ivanov to the Open Society Institute in Bucharest, which contains radical demands for separating Pirin Macedonia from Bulgaria. The letter reaches the Court before one of the key deliberations and changes the direction of the debates. – see 'Case of the United Macedonian Organization Ilinden – PIRIN and Others v. Bulgaria (Application no. 59489/00), also Milev, 'Theory of Macedonian Conspiracy' in Capital newspaper, *ibid*.

<sup>663</sup> Art.5(4) of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria.

A sudden blow to the years of consistent effort of the democratic government to normalize bilateral relations with Macedonia, as well as an obstacle to Bulgaria's progress in the Europeanization process, such a judgement can be best understood contextually. Around the beginning of the millennium the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse had reached already visible dimensions. It was present in the justification and interpretation of almost all politically significant decisions at state level and in rhetoric from the entire political spectrum. On the issue of minority rights, however, Europeanization discourse was notably ambivalent. Lacking a definitive reference point in its own legislation<sup>664</sup>, the EU followed the lead of the Council of Europe which only produced a relevant international instrument in the mid-1990s. Controversial in its missing definition of the term 'national' minority, the instrument was not even ratified by all EU member states at the time or was ratified with reservations.<sup>665</sup> Minority protection was not formally part of the EU membership criteria (formulated in the early 1990s) even though indirectly, through the requirement for functioning democracy and the human rights provisions of the *acquis*, it had acquired significance in the membership preparation and negotiation. So, predictably, the normative power of the signifier of 'European-ness' in the area of minority protection was unconvincing and this had been noted in public debates on the issue in both Bulgaria and Macedonia. Clashing with the meanings upheld by the powerful signifiers of nationalist discourse, it inevitably faced resistance. In the immediate aftermath of war in Kosovo and the escalating inter-ethnic tension in Macedonia, the question of recognizing minority status and granting minority rights outside the already established model became extremely problematic.

This context helps understand the decision to ban the political party of the pro-Macedonian activists in Bulgaria, despite the marginalization of nationalist narratives interpreting Macedonianism as a threat to Bulgaria's national identity and despite the empowerment of European narratives positioning Macedonia in the frame of amity and cooperation. Predictably, this provoked negative reactions on behalf of the Macedonian

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<sup>664</sup> The 1992 European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, the 1994 signed Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the system for protection developed under the ECHR which set Europe's minimum standards of equality and non-discrimination.

<sup>665</sup> E.g. Germany and Luxembourg, see

<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeDeclarations.asp?CL=ENG&NT=157&VL=1>.

state. The Macedonian president expressed 'regret for the decision of the Bulgarian magistrates and hope that the Bulgarian authorities will be more careful in the future with regard to the delicate bilateral issues'<sup>666</sup>. The prime minister confirmed that 'the decision does not help the good bilateral relations'<sup>667</sup>. The foreign minister voiced doubt in Bulgaria's European future 'because it does not respect minority rights'<sup>668</sup>. The Macedonian parliament reacted by adopting a declaration of support for the members of UMO 'Ilinden-PIRIN'<sup>669</sup>. It is important to note, however, that these official Macedonian reactions publicized immediately after the publication of the Bulgarian court's decision, did not have further impact on bilateral relations. They were necessary in view of the media turmoil caused in Macedonian public space but at the official state level they had no further consequences. The official visit of the Bulgarian president in two months' time was expected as planned and the heads of state and government extended a 'cordial welcome'<sup>670</sup> to Stoyanov throughout his stay. More importantly, the Bulgarian president was also welcomed by the Macedonian media. Even the notoriously suspicious Bulgarian media noted the 'warm' reception<sup>671</sup>. At the formal press conference given by the two heads of state in Skopje the Bulgarian was indeed asked about the constitutional ban on UMO 'Ilinden-PIRIN' but his response satisfied the audience. Stoyanov explained that the political party was banned because it called for changing the territorial borders of the state, which contradicted the constitution.<sup>672</sup> Nevertheless, the two presidents declared their accord on a series of issues, which was confirmed in the signed treaties and agreements, and re-iterated their good will to further develop bilateral cooperation, including in view of European integration. In this sense the issue of the constitutional ban did not affect the manner in which talks were held, nor did it affect their outcome. This

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<sup>666</sup> Trajkovski, reported by Capital newspaper of 10<sup>th</sup> Mar 2000 at [http://www.capital.bg/politika\\_i\\_ikonomika/sedmicata/2000/03/10/254801\\_antibulgarski\\_protesti\\_v\\_make\\_doniia/](http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/sedmicata/2000/03/10/254801_antibulgarski_protesti_v_make_doniia/).

<sup>667</sup> Georgievski, reported by Capital newspaper of 10<sup>th</sup> Mar 2000.

<sup>668</sup> Dimitrov, reported by Capital newspaper of 10<sup>th</sup> Mar 2000.

<sup>669</sup> Plenary session on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar 2000.

<sup>670</sup> Editorial Sasho Ordanoski, Forum journal, Skopje 10<sup>th</sup> May 2000.

<sup>671</sup> Aleksey Yurdanov, 'Macedonia Less Suspicious towards Bulgaria', editorial for Capital newspaper of 19<sup>th</sup> May 1999.

<sup>672</sup> Stoyanov and Trajkovski press conference in Skopje on 19<sup>th</sup> May, BTA Courier Service.



suggests that nationalist discourse had already been discredited at official state level, even though it was still present in the domestic political space around minority issues.

In Macedonia the discursive dynamics around the issue of political representation of a pro-Bulgarian minority evolved in exactly the same fashion, despite Macedonian protests against the banning of pro-Macedonian political parties in Bulgaria. The political parties and organizations claiming to represent the Bulgarian minority were banned from official activity and registration. Several of the organizations acquired greater public significance, either because of their media presence or because of the publicity they achieved through alternative means. Among the political parties two have been more visible. The pro-Bulgarian UMRO-Tatkovinsko<sup>673</sup>, one of the many organizations laying claims to the historical name of the Macedonian liberation movements, interpreted the state of Macedonia as a second state of the Bulgarian people and demanded that 'the borders of 1913 be erased'<sup>674</sup>. By the statements of its members, the organization had set up committees in 'almost all towns of the Republic of Macedonia'<sup>675</sup>. However, it was never officially registered. The Human Rights Party<sup>676</sup> was the other pro-Bulgarian organization which acquired visible public presence. Its leader claimed that it represented 'more than 200 000 Bulgarians [as] members'<sup>677</sup>. The party denied the distinct character of the Macedonian nation, claiming it was Bulgarian<sup>678</sup>, and declared the Bulgarians in Macedonia were being 'assimilated and terrorized'<sup>679</sup> by the Skopje government, which is why it announced that it wanted 'Bulgaria to become homeland for the Bulgarians in Macedonia'<sup>680</sup>. By the end of 1993 the party was officially prohibited as unconstitutional.<sup>681</sup> The argumentation of the court refers to the activity of the party's

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<sup>673</sup> Led by Dimitar Tsarnomarov.

<sup>674</sup> Dimitar Tsernomarov, Makedoniya newspaper from 18-25 Apr 1995.

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>676</sup> Of Iliya Ilievski.

<sup>677</sup> Iliya Ilievski, Novinar newspaper, 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 1993.

<sup>678</sup> Trud newspaper, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1994.

<sup>679</sup> Zemya newspaper, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1993.

<sup>680</sup> Svoboden narod newspaper, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1993.

<sup>681</sup> Court decision from 9<sup>th</sup> Dec 1993.

leader who threatened the territorial integrity and the borders of the Macedonian state,<sup>682</sup> an identical judicial position as in Bulgaria.

In the context of increased domestic instability of the early transition years and international uncertainty as a result of non-recognition, nationalist narratives of Macedonian identity prevented any interpretations of such public demands other than as threats to the national security of the Macedonian state. But even under the government of Georgievski in the late 1990s, which was notoriously 'pro-Bulgarian'<sup>683</sup>, these organizations failed to establish any meaningful dialogue with the state. This suggests that they gradually lost political relevance. Indeed, a new descendant pro-Bulgarian organization, the 'RADKO' Association<sup>684</sup> did register formally in 2000<sup>685</sup>. Its political platform, however, was much more moderate than that of its predecessors'. It called for 'cultural and spiritual unity' with Bulgaria but clearly avoided any territorial references to the same<sup>686</sup>. Among its key goals was achieving equal status for the Bulgarian minority to the status of all the other nationalities mentioned in the Macedonian constitution which represented a 'constitutive element' of the Macedonian nation. Consequently, the organization also demanded that the Bulgarian language be one of the official languages in the Republic.<sup>687</sup> As in Bulgaria, however, judicial arguments gave way to political considerations. The seized Constitutional court found that the organization's platform and statutes were 'aimed at forceful change of the official state order, impeded the Macedonian people from freely expressing their national identity, and instigated national hatred and intolerance'<sup>688</sup>. Clearly designating the programme of the pro-Bulgarian association as a threat to the Macedonian identity in the official position of the state was incompatible with the declared political will to advance bilateral trust and understanding. The situation bore significant similarities with the reaction to the registration of the pro-Macedonian political party in Bulgaria. However, in the Macedonian context it is important to emphasize that the court decision was taken amidst the ongoing civil conflict between

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<sup>682</sup> Art.3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>683</sup> As accused by the Macedonian media and opposition, see Capital newspaper editorial of 12<sup>th</sup> May 2000.

<sup>684</sup> Led by Vladimir Paunkovski.

<sup>685</sup> Statutes <http://www.radkomk.com/OSNOVANE.pdf>.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>688</sup> <http://www.radkomk.com/UstavniotSud.htm>.

the Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority<sup>689</sup>, which added utmost urgency to the matter already framed in the discourse of national security. Obviously, in a situation of open conflict caused by extremist minority demands, the possibility of identical development along the lines of another majority-minority relationship was inadmissible. Again, as in Bulgaria, the judicial outcome was not transferred to the bilateral space of communication and did not affect Bulgarian-Macedonian relations in any harmful manner. As soon as the inter-ethnic conflict was over and the Macedonian state began to normalize its politics again, inter-state dialogue with Bulgaria was resumed with the early 2002 visit of the next Bulgarian president.<sup>690</sup>

It is important to note that both in Bulgaria and Macedonia the issue of recognizing national minorities, when it comes to Macedonian and Bulgarian minority groups respectively, is framed in a discourse slightly different from the discourse surrounding the rest of the national minority groups. While the terms 'Turkish minority' or 'Albanian minority' or 'Roma minority' have been established unambiguously to designate the respective communities, in the case of the Macedonian and Bulgarian minorities the denominator used is not that of nationality but of affiliation. Thus in Bulgaria it is officially talked of 'Macedonianists' while in Macedonia – of 'Bulgarophiles'. In view of the sedimentation of divergent historical narratives excluding the 'Other' as a constitutive element in national identity constructs, this is unsurprising. Even in the context of Europeanization and 'European' re-narration of the national story, these divergent narratives are still present because they are part of the historical past. Europeanization as a narrative is focused on the political present and future. It came into being precisely because it enabled closure of the (conflictual) past. In this sense the Europeanization discourse does not aim to change the stories of the past. Instead, it is meant to shift the focus from the past to the possibilities of the present and future and, with time, create new stories out of them. This helps understand why Bulgaria and Macedonia continued to speak with the categories of their nationalist pasts, where the 'Other' did not exist as an element of the 'Self', when it came to minorities. They simply had no different story to tell.

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<sup>689</sup> US Institute of Peace report, 'Macedonia: Understanding History, Preventing Future Conflict' at <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr115.html>.

<sup>690</sup> Parvanov, Feb 2002.

What is significant, however, is that they no longer used these categories in their official communication with each other and no longer allowed them to affect their bilateral relations. Articulated as an official position of the state, this was one of the key predicates for the marginalization and eventual dislocation of conflictual narratives from political discourse. In the long term this could also create the need for re-thinking of history.

In collecting the national census data from the years 2001 (Bulgaria) and 2002 (Macedonia) both states provided the technical possibility for their citizens to declare their ethnic and national identity as Macedonian or Bulgarian respectively. This is worth highlighting since the structure of the previous censuses, particularly the first censuses from the post-communist period, had been questioned as prejudiced or manipulative in this regard. As a result, 5,071 people in Bulgaria identified themselves as ethnically Macedonian<sup>691</sup> and 1,417 people in Macedonia identified themselves as of Bulgarian origin<sup>692</sup>. These numbers may seem insignificant, especially compared to the claims of the minority activists in both states for thousands of members of the respective minorities<sup>693</sup>. But what is significant is that the state officially provided the option to declare citizenship and national and ethnic identity as separate categories. So if the small numbers of the members of the Macedonian and Bulgarian minority in the two states should be questioned at all, it is worth considering as well how relevant the claims of the minorities' political representatives are. Despite the juridical bans on political party registration for minority organizations, the pro-Macedonian party in Bulgaria did have a chance to participate in local elections<sup>694</sup> and the return from its participation largely confirmed the census data. In Macedonia pro-Bulgarian parties were not allowed into the electoral competition, but if the situation there is similar, then a disturbing conclusion presents itself. Pro-Macedonian and pro-Bulgarian activists might be utilizing minority discourse to advance their own political agendas without either comparable representation or necessity among the minority communities. This suggestion raises concern not least because it reveals attempts for politicization of narratives of national identity in a conflictual manner, which could have

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<sup>691</sup> See <http://www.nsi.bg/Census/Ethnos.htm>.

<sup>692</sup> See <http://makstat.stat.gov.mk/pxweb2007bazi/Database/.asp>.

<sup>693</sup> But were largely confirmed in the 2011 census data from both states.

<sup>694</sup> Which happened in the period immediately following the establishment and preceding the ban on the party.

serious negative implications both for the normality of domestic politics and for the normality of bilateral relations. One way to neutralize these would be to capture minority representation into the mechanisms and logic of democratic politics and gradually normalize the discourse of urgency surrounding it. What problematizes this option in the context of Europeanization is the fact that Europe itself is often ambivalent on it. Undecided between individual and collective protection and rights<sup>695</sup>, integration in Europe has so far managed to avoid taking a firm stance on minority representation, despite the already established jurisdiction of the European Court on Human Rights on the matter<sup>696</sup>. Analyzing it from the perspective of clashing discourses of national identity – those upheld by nationalism and those upheld by Europeanization – helps understand why.

### ***Europeanization Effects on Identity Narratives on National Minorities***

National minority issues in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations offer particularly difficult cases of accommodating narratives of national identity within the discourse of Europeanization. The reasons for this are largely related to the discursive characteristics of Europeanization, even though the deep level of sedimentation of national minority narratives is also a factor. On the one hand, Europeanization was designed as a pragmatic strategy of transcending past antagonisms and the discourse that maintains it deliberately diverts political attention from history. Europeanization discourse is politically unconcerned with the past, which leaves historical narratives to alternative interpretations. Furthermore, European integration opened up a discursive space, in which the problem of national minorities ceased to exist because both nations and their minorities ceased to be interpreted in terms of 'otherness'. National minority issues, embedded in history, remained therefore largely governed by interpretations of the discourse of nationalism. On the other hand, even when Europeanization attempts to specifically address national

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<sup>695</sup> For an overview of the clash, see Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>696</sup> See Geoff Gilbert, 'The Burgeoning Minority Rights Jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights', *Human Rights Quarterly* 24 (2002): 736-780.

minority issues, its discursive power is unconvincing because it is aimed at capturing one of the central signifiers of nationalism. In view of the relatively recent and quite loose normative accommodation of national minorities within the European integration project, this attempt cannot be successful in such short terms.

Europeanization effects on conflictual narratives of identity focused on the issue of national minorities are thus restricted to two things. First, gradually detaching them from historical interpretations and attaching them to the practicalities of the democratic process. Second, removing national minority issues from the scope of ‘high politics’ – defense, security, foreign policy. The ambivalence between ‘European’ interpretations of national identity and nationalist-biased policy on minorities inevitably requires longer periods of time to disappear from the discursive spaces of domestic politics (Table 12).

State	Bulgaria	Macedonia
Signifiers upheld by Nationalism	Territorial threat	Territorial threat
	Incompatibility with narration of nationhood	Incompatibility with narration of nationhood
	Impossibility for political participation	Impossibility for political participation
Signifiers upheld by Europeanization	Taking minority narratives off the agenda of foreign and security policy through dissociation from the signifier of territory	Detaching narratives on Bulgaria from the positions of ‘occupier’ and ‘aggressor’
	Distancing policy from history	Maintaining a realm of commonality
	Ambivalence between rhetoric and policy	Ambivalence between rhetoric and policy

Table 12. Narratives on National Minorities in Bulgaria and Macedonia.

### ***Conclusion: Comparing Identity Narratives of ‘Otherness’***

Comparing transformations in the narratives on minorities with those in the narratives on recognition and language reveals important aspects of the discursive logic of Europeanization in reading national identity. In the first place, it demonstrates that ‘European’ interpretations begin to acquire taken-for-granted quality in time. The narratives telling the ‘European’ story of recognition, for instance, appeared dominant towards the end of transition, despite the controversies which they raised around the actual time of recognition. They were no longer challenged by alternative interpretations.

Nationalist interpretations of language also gradually ceased to appear in official state discourse, despite their deep sedimentation and increased popular appeal. By the time when the issue of minorities acquired more visible political dimensions, even the extremely salient nationalist interpretations of it were easily removable from formal inter-state dialogue. This suggests that with the hegemonic empowerment of Europeanization, European readings of national identity are stabilized and have the potential to dislocate nationalist hegemony.

Second, the comparison reveals that articulating 'European' meanings of central identity narratives becomes easier over time. With the progress of the integration efforts of the two states highly antagonistic interpretations become problematic for the simple fact that inter-state/ inter-ethnonational conflictuality is incompatible with the project of 'Europe'. The gradual empowerment of the discourse of Europeanization as hegemonic highlighted the incapacity of nationalism to uphold national identity in a politically relevant manner and enabled the stabilization of 'European' interpretations. This suggests that the progress of integration emphasized the immediate political relevance of Europeanization and significantly improved the credibility of its interpretations of identity.

Third, placing the three narrative groups against each other and comparing the transformations which occurred in them with the empowerment of Europeanization reveals that some discursive elements are more difficult to read than others. Despite the varied degree of sedimentation of nationalist interpretations, their marginalization and dislocation generally follows similar discursive logic. Nationalist narratives on minorities, for instance, do appear domestically at official state level even when other nationalist articulations in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations have already been compromised. But they disappear from official bilateral dialogue, which creates the condition of possibility for their de-politicization and eventual marginalization from domestic state articulations as well. The discursive element of minority representation, however, is continuously interpreted in a hegemonic manner within the organizing order of nationalism. As already noted above, this points to an omission within the discursive framework of Europeanization. This suggests that the discourse power of Europeanization is linked not

only to the external political relevance of integration, but also to the specificities of its progress within the traditional limits of 'Europe'.

Overall, the progress of the (preparation for) integration processes asserted the hegemonic power of Europeanization to authoritatively articulate the meaning of national identity. In the reading of identity narratives of 'Other' it greatly facilitated reconciliation along most lines of conflictuality. This notably improved the credibility of 'European' identity articulations, marginalized nationalist interpretations and re-enforced the hegemony of the discourse of Europeanization as upholding the new positive story of the nation.



## CHAPTER VIII

### EUROPEANIZATION OF IDENTITY NARRATIVES IN BULGARIA AND MACEDONIA

Having established the dominant interpretations of identity narratives determining the position of 'Self' and their possible implications for Bulgarian-Macedonian relations (Chapter VI), the analysis then followed three narrative groups maintaining bilateral conflictuality (Chapter VII). Identifying changes in their discursive narration with the progress of Europeanization, the investigation established a visible trend towards reconciliation along most of the conflictual narratives. Revealing a change in the discursive position of 'Other', the transformed narratives increasingly imagined a 'European' identity of the state. The purpose of Chapter VIII is to establish how these transformations fed back into the domestic discursive space. Focusing on the same discursive elements which upheld national identity at the beginning of transition, this chapter aims to identify modifications in their interpretation towards the end of transition. It is meant to close the chronological frame of the studied period. An investigation of change in some of the most deeply-seated national identity narratives promises to generate a fuller picture of the identity transformation which occurred in the context of empowering 'Europe' and of the discursive mechanisms of its accommodation.

#### ***Bulgarian National Identity Narratives towards the End of Transition***

Bulgaria was formally invited to begin its negotiations for EU membership at the very end of the old millennium<sup>697</sup>. Initiating the negotiations made visible the reality of integration preparations in a very practical way. This helped the political 'imagining' of Bulgaria's

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<sup>697</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 1999 at the Helsinki European Council.

European prospects and greatly facilitated the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse. Europeanization was briefly destabilized by the moment of disenchantment related to the 'lagging'<sup>698</sup> behind the Visegrad states in their progress towards full membership and the inclusion of the Baltic states in the earlier enlargement wave<sup>699</sup>. But Bulgaria quickly resumed its Euro-enthusiasm as its efforts in the negotiation processes began to receive immediate feedback from the EU and access to pre-accession funds. The thorough reforms processes which the EU itself undertook in order to be able to cope with the future large-scale enlargement<sup>700</sup> also asserted the prospect of Bulgaria's membership as a tangible strategic goal.

The discourse of Europeanization was empowered as a totalizing discourse capable of re-organizing the entire political space, since it offered alternative meanings to key political categories. It began to appear on every level and every dimension of political life as a legitimizing strategy providing the norm. The prospect of EU membership as the ultimate positive affirmation of Bulgaria's 'European-ness' gave it the credibility which maintained its power. This determined the political relevance of the meanings provided by Europeanization's 'floating signifiers' of statehood and nationhood, which inevitably clashed with traditionally dominant nationalist interpretations. The interaction of these signifiers around the nodal points of the national identity construction 'tied' meanings in a different way and produced a modified pattern of national identity which was more compatible with the changing political contexts of empowering Europeanization. The new grand discourse did not dramatically re-arrange the identity narratives' carrying signifiers. National community, territory, purpose continued to represent nodal points upholding key national identity narratives as their function in the structure of the nation-state had been historically conditioned as essential. In this sense, Europeanization could not break the supporting 'web' of nationalism because of its indispensability to statehood. What it did

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<sup>698</sup> On the distinction between 'leaders' and 'laggards', see for instance, Charles Gati, 'If not Democracy What? Leaders, Laggards and Losers in the Postcommunist World' in Michael Mandelbaum (ed.), *Post-Communism Four Perspectives* (Washington: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996).

<sup>699</sup> The Baltic states were not among the immediate referents of the 1993 Copenhagen Council appeal to the 'associated member states' to join the Community, whereas Bulgaria was; see Asya Bocheva, 'Bulgaria in Brussels' Waiting Room: Enlargement Is Still Seen as Concerning Only Poland, Czech republic and Hungary' in Capital newspaper, 2<sup>nd</sup> Jun 2000, or 'The Day We Missed the Wave' in Capital newspaper of 14<sup>th</sup> Dec 2002.

<sup>700</sup> See European Council in Nice 2000 at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/nice1\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/nice1_en.htm).

was gradually marginalize nationalism's key interpretations of national identity signifiers by emphasizing different dimensions, opening up new possibilities, and re-thinking established rules. It thus managed to modify the contents of each of the carrying signifiers and ultimately transform the entire construct. In the course of empowering Europeanization discourse, national identity appeared more positive, more inclusive, and less focused on the past. The following paragraphs highlight the key aspects of this transformation.

### *Identity Narratives of National Community*

The interpretation of the signifier of the 'nation' in terms of 'national unity' had become so salient at the beginning of Bulgaria's transition because it contained a formula for preserving the integrity of the national community in view of the inter-ethnic tensions which had marred the period. Towards the end of Bulgaria's transition the issue was no longer on the urgent political agenda, so the idea of 'national unity' ceased to form the centre of political debate and was no longer the object of securitization practices. Recurrently present in official rhetoric from the early years of transition as a panaceaic legitimization strategy, towards 2005 it was only invoked in the specific minority-majority context which originally increased its salience and mostly in terms of historical self-appraisal, not in view of everyday politics.<sup>701</sup> This opened the political space for alternative articulations of the meaning of the nation. The hegemonic discourse of Europeanization provided the most relevant alternatives.

Despite the continued validity of the constitutional prohibition of ethnic parties, for instance, which originated in the nationalistic idea of a monolithic nation and its political representation at a 'national' level, the locus of party activity was no longer limited within the nation. Political parties were increasingly being interpreted not as national formations *per se*, but as members of larger – European – political families. In a televised interview in one of the political weeklies, the prime minister discusses the reaction of the Bulgarian democratic formations (centre-right) to the impending EU membership in comparison with

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<sup>701</sup> E.g. Lyutfi Mestan at the sitting of the National Committee for Celebrating Bulgaria's Accession to the European Union, 8<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006.

the reactions of their European equivalent, the European People's Party.<sup>702</sup> In a different, printed interview, he clarifies the positions of his own party in a similar way:

*"The Bulgarian Socialist Party [...] is a full member of the Party of the European Socialists. This means that our ideology and policies should concur with the basic principles and values in the policies of the parties in this family."*<sup>703</sup>

Insisting on the normative imperatives ensuing from membership in the European political family ('our policies should concur'), the prime minister emphasizes this aspect of belonging. Membership in the European political community invokes not only privileges but duties. Shifting the boundaries of political party representation from the national to the European space is one way in which nationalist interpretations of national community were being challenged. The idea of the unity of the nation was marginalized to give way to alternative values, articulated at national level but linking the national to a community of nations.

Key among these values are the imperatives of cooperation and tolerance domestically, and of partnership and dialogue externally. In contrast with the nationalist interpretation of a monolithic nation as a highest value, the discourse of Europeanization emphasizes the centrality of difference and interprets it as a context of opportunity. Inter-ethnic and inter-religious differences and their successful accommodation acquire salience as a signifier of civilization. Among the main contributions which Bulgaria would make with its prospective bid for EU membership, the president highlights precisely this:

*"[...] Bulgaria will bring to the EU its example of cooperation and tolerance between ethnicities and religions. Our model of ethno-political accommodation is not new. [...]"*

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<sup>702</sup> Sergey Stanishev, prime minister of the Republic of Bulgaria in an interview for the Bulgarian National Television Political Analyses Show 'Panorama' on 29<sup>th</sup> Sep 2006. Available at <http://old.government.bg/cgi-bin/e-cms/vis/vis.pl?s=001&p=0043&n=000003&g=> together with the other texts by Stanishev as prime minister used here, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>703</sup> Stanishev, Trud newspaper, 4<sup>th</sup> Sep 2006.

*Bulgaria can offer its European partners this experience, if you would allow me the immodesty.”*<sup>704</sup>

Implying lack of modesty in offering this contribution, the statement indicates the great value which is placed on the model of tolerance and cooperation. The stark contrast between the way Bulgarian national identity had been articulated at the beginning and towards the end of transition is visible on this point. The idea of ethnic tolerance is articulated as an essential characteristic of Bulgaria's transition, even though the first post-communist years had been strained precisely by inter-ethnic tensions caused by intolerance.

*“The ethnic aspects of Bulgaria's transition [cannot be] underestimated or unappreciated.”*<sup>705</sup>

*“We have a great advantage. With all our defects, we kept the ethnic peace and tolerance, which is our great achievement.”*<sup>706</sup>

Marginalizing the idea of unity and emphasizing the formula of tolerance to difference and national cooperation, Bulgaria's national identity construct appears much more inclusive towards the end of transition. This is demonstrated in the interpretation of external relations, where the values of tolerance and cooperation are translated into the imperatives of partnership and dialogue.

*“Characterized by intensive contacts at the level of all institutions, [...] Bulgarian-Macedonian relations are European in the true sense of the word and are a good example for all nations and the whole region.”*<sup>707</sup>

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<sup>704</sup> President Georgi Pervanov, ‘Bulgaria at the Doorstep of the EU’, Lecture at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 2006. This text and the cited henceforward available online at [http://www.president.bg/news\\_archive.php?from=news&type=3](http://www.president.bg/news_archive.php?from=news&type=3).

<sup>705</sup> Pervanov, ‘Bulgaria's European Integration: Lessons and Challenges’, Speech at the University for National and World Economy conference ‘Bulgaria's Road to Europe’ on 10<sup>th</sup> Nov 2004 at the National Palace of Culture.

<sup>706</sup> Stanishev, Bulgarian National Television, Kanal 1, 25<sup>th</sup> Mar 2006, ‘Media Control’ discussion with Milena Tsvetanska BNT, Tzvetanka Rizova Nova Television, Anna Tsoleva BTV, Velichko Konakchiev Bulgarian National Radion, Mila Avramova Trud newspaper, Boryana Tsacheva 24 hours newspaper, Petyo Tsekov Segi newspaper.

<sup>707</sup> Pervanov, interview for the Macedonian Nation Radio on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006.

*"I have had more than 15 meetings with the president of Macedonia for the last four years. There is no other period in our history, so full of intensive political contacts at all levels with Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and the rest of our neighbours."*<sup>708</sup>

Interpreting bilateral and multilateral institutional dialogue as the European norm and claiming excellence in it ('good example', 'no other period in our history'), this rhetoric positions Bulgarian national identity firmly within the Europeanization discourse. It also reveals the stark contrast with the previous decade, when silence in the bilateral relations was interpreted as defending national identity claims.

The opening up of Bulgaria's national identity construct to transcend the constraints of the nation-state is also visible in the new articulations of the notion of national interest. It is no longer formulated as referring strictly to the national space but is interpreted to include the well-being of the immediate neighbour states, the region and Europe in general:

*"[...] advocacy for the interests of our neighbours [...] is part of our national interest. Having stable neighbours. It is our national interest that our neighbours have a clear European perspective."*<sup>709</sup>

Such interpretation of the national interest is significant because it implies a responsibility towards the immediate national 'Other(s)' which is no longer governed by the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic of the nation-state. Responsibility for the well-being of the 'Other' and awareness of the intertwinement with the well-being of the 'Self' are indicative of a shift in the 'Self'-'Other' boundary beyond state borders. They are indicative of a sense of belonging to a community of states, expressed in a politically pragmatic way: through the common interest. The reference to the 'European perspective' of the immediate neighbours and its significance for the stability of the region clearly indicates this community.

In general, the discourse of Europeanization modified interpretations of the signifier of the nation which did not dislocate but notably marginalized nationalist interpretations of unity

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<sup>708</sup> Pervanov, 'Bulgaria: Stabilizing Factor in South-Eastern Europe', speech for the Association for South-Eastern Europe on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 2006.

<sup>709</sup> Pervanov, 'Bulgaria: a Stabilizing Factor in South-Eastern Europe'.

and exclusivity. Emphasizing different national values, offering different opportunities for political action and articulating the national interest in a different manner, Europeanization interpreted the signifier of the nation in a more open, more inclusive, and more active manner, which notably transformed the contents of Bulgarian national identity towards the end of Bulgaria's transition to give it more credibility in the new contexts.

### *Identity Narratives of Territory*

Europeanization's interpretation of the identity signifier of territory had a similar effect. Nationalism's emphasis on the notion of territorial integrity as a highest national value gradually gave way to different interpretations of national territory. Perceiving territorial space in its entirety as a central aspect of Bulgarian national identity had not been replaced by a more flexible territorial arrangement in the short span of a decade and a half. But this perception had significantly been de-politicized. Domestic inter-ethnic relations and cross-border inter-national relations were no longer interpreted as a threat to the territorial integrity of the state. This allowed diminishing the political relevance of this interpretation of territory. At the same time, improved domestic inter-ethnic relations and regional inter-national relations had come to be recognized as a political resource of legitimacy and prestige. This enabled 'imagining' territory no longer as a fortress against the 'Other(s)' but as a bridge towards them.

This transformation has been illustrated by the changed significance of borders. Political emphasis is no longer put on their maintenance as barriers (in terms of 'barbed wire' facilities, increased number of 'border guards', etc.). Quite to the contrary, concerted political effort is put in their opening towards the 'Other'. Developing connecting railway and roadway infrastructure, establishing new commercial border control points, facilitating cross-border businesses, are some of the trends that testify to this change. They are all interpreted within the context of European integration and Europeanization of the Balkans:

*"[When] all Balkan states, without exception, have their clear European perspective, [...] I personally believe this will happen in the foreseeable future, the borders between different Balkan states [...] will lose their specific practical significance."*<sup>710</sup>

On a different occasion, upon opening a new border checkpoint, the president appeals for continuing efforts 'for the true opening on both sides of the border'<sup>711</sup>. Interpreting the opening of borders as a benefit for the people and as an achievement for the state clearly demonstrates the contrast with earlier articulations of the significance of borders. Awareness of this change is confirmed in the reference to borders and border areas as 'doors' to Europe.<sup>712</sup> Rhetorically identifying the link between European integration and the decreased practical relevance of borders is an important political strategy. It aims at emphasizing the territorial commonality of European spaces as opposed to the separateness of national spaces. This facilitated the increased permeability of borders and put emphasis on their connecting (not separating) function.

One aspect of the interpretation of borders and their significance in Bulgarian politics still perpetuated the function of border maintenance but it was directly linked to Bulgaria's aspired belonging to the common European space. It is related to Bulgaria's prospective role as the gatekeeper of European Union's external border. In this sense Bulgaria is keen to demonstrate its capabilities in managing its borders even before actual membership:

*"Bulgaria already ambitiously and correctly fulfils its obligations as external border of the EU. [...] The reforms we are implementing [...] have a direct effect on the common European space because security in united Europe is indivisible. [...] Bulgaria can contribute to that."*<sup>713</sup>

Thus, as much as borders continue to have a political relevance, it is defined in terms of protecting the common European space from external threats. This interpretation demonstrates in practice the dynamics of shifting the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic from the

<sup>710</sup> Pervanov, Summit on Balkan Economy and Tourism in Duras, Albania on 28<sup>th</sup> Apr 2006.

<sup>711</sup> Pervanov, 'Elhovo Becomes a Door to Europe', speech during the president's visit in the municipality of Elhovo on 25<sup>th</sup> Mar 2006.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>713</sup> Pervanov, Lecture on National Security on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jun 2006 at the National Palace of Culture.



national to the supra-national, which the Europeanization discourse puts into motion. The 'Other' is a threat only as an outsider to the commonality of Europe.

Translated into everyday politics, this awareness is also confirmed in the amendment of the constitutional provision prohibiting foreigners from land ownership rights in Bulgaria.<sup>714</sup> True, the enforcement of the new text is postponed<sup>715</sup> in time and subject to conditions<sup>716</sup>. But the fact that the sedimented quality of the constitutional arrangement had been successfully challenged by the demands of membership negotiations testifies for the power of the Europeanization discourse over nationalist interpretations of territory as exclusively national and undivisible. The normality with which the constitutional amendment was voted and approved is illustrative of that:

*"[amending the constitutional text on foreign ownership over land] is a natural change and we accept it. Giving up something we also receive a lot, as part of a political and economic community."*<sup>717</sup>

Parliamentary debates on the change did not avoid references to preserving the traditions and independence of Bulgarian constitutionalism<sup>718</sup> but they did not convincingly challenge the political priority of the imperatives of Europeanization.<sup>719</sup> It is in this sense that nationalist interpretations of identity referring to the signifier of territory were marginalized in favour of interpretations of the national space as part of a larger, supra-national community.

### *Identity Narratives of Purpose*

The discourse of Europeanization also had transformative effect on the contents of the signifier of national purpose. Sedimented interpretations embedded into the discourse of nationalism revolved around the idea of centrality on the Balkans and fluctuated between

<sup>714</sup> Amended Art. 22, Para.2 in force from the enforcement date of Bulgaria's accession treaty.

<sup>715</sup> Transition period of 7 years after accession.

<sup>716</sup> Ownership is legalized to EU citizens only (not any foreign national) and if they intend to settle in Bulgaria, see the Law on Land Ownership and Rights at <http://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2132550145>.

<sup>717</sup> Stanishev at the National Assembly, 16<sup>th</sup> Apr 2004, 348<sup>th</sup> session.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>719</sup> Meglena Kuneva, 'Constitutional Amendment Is Expected by the EU' on BTV, 'V Desetkata' programme, 2<sup>nd</sup> Apr 2006.

narratives of victimization and paternalistic visions of purpose based on stories of past grandeur and tragic glory. As early as the first half of the 1990s European interpretations of national purpose began to affect the idea of general direction at state level. A decade later they hegemonically articulated the meanings of national purpose as inseparable from the discourse of Europeanization.

One of the most dominant narratives aimed to articulate Bulgaria's role into the Europeanization project not simply as a beneficiary but as an active contributor who can add value to the community it aspired to join. The narrative served the dual purpose of a self-enhancement strategy (internally) and of a negotiation strategy (externally). Taken up at the highest political level – head of state and government – the narrative of Bulgaria's value and contribution to Europe became increasingly salient during the membership preparations:

*“[W]e do not see EU membership as consummators, as a state which hopes to be receiving funds [...]. So far, and in even greater degree from now on, Bulgaria will be an active factor of stability in South-Eastern Europe, a state implementing policies of good neighbourly relations, developing the cooperation model in all areas among the states in the region, a state which will be one of the key generators of peace, democratization, effective market and social reforms.”<sup>720</sup>*

The narrative essentially tells the common story of Bulgaria's transition: democracy, market liberalization, social reform, preserving the ethnic peace at home and improving bilateral relations with neighbours from the region. What enabled turning it into a story of uniqueness is its locus: against the background of the turbulent Western Balkans, Bulgaria's transition seemed remarkable in its normality.

*“We have the self confidence of a factor of stability and peace for the whole region of South-Eastern Europe. Bulgaria will contribute to the EU its capital of excellent*

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<sup>720</sup> Stanishev, verbatim report from the public sitting of the European Integration Council chaired by the prime minister, 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 2006.

*relations with its neighbours, [...] provide guarantee for the stability of the region, which the EU itself should seek.*"<sup>721</sup>



Pointing to the necessary dividends which Bulgaria can bring to the EU, the president effectively reverses the victimization rhetoric to demonstrate how Europe depends on Bulgaria's role and not the other way around. This discursive strategy, though arguable in the validity of its claim, is important because it aims to provide a credible positive role for the state in the wider context of Europeanization, when nationalist narratives of past glory have been left behind. It is this interpretation of purpose that ensured the power of the Europeanization discourse in Bulgarian politics:

*"Today the Republic of Bulgaria is the most advanced candidate state from the region in its negotiations for EU membership. This fact imposes on us additional duties in advancing the processes of integration in South-Eastern Europe."*<sup>722</sup>

Stabilizing Bulgaria's place within the discourse of Europeanization, in its turn, enables perpetuating the 'Europe' narratives in the Balkans, as Bulgaria's 'European' interpretations of purpose are closely linked to its position in the region:

*"Bulgaria's EU membership will not only confirm our European identity. It will also send an important positive signal towards our neighbours for the irreversibility of the unification processes in Europe. [...] security, stability and prosperity of South-Eastern Europe [are only possible] through the European prospective of the region."*<sup>723</sup>

Interpreting Bulgarian narratives of national purpose within the discourse of Europeanization provides Bulgaria with a credible positive role in the region and in Europe that is articulated in terms of 'setting an example' of peace, stability, prosperity.<sup>724</sup> Maintaining the credibility of this role posed certain imperatives on the state's foreign policy behaviour, which in effect promoted regional cooperation and international amity. In view of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, this was the indicator of 'European-ness':

<sup>721</sup> Pervanov, 'Bulgaria at the Doorstep of the EU'.

<sup>722</sup> Pervanov, 'Bulgaria's New Regional Role after NATO Membership and Prospective EU Membership', lecture on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2004 at the National Palace of Culture.

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>724</sup> Pervanov, interview for the Macedonian National Radio on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006.

*“Bulgaria has never had such good relations either with Macedonia or with the rest of the states in the region. There has been an ongoing dialogue [...] which had not been seen before in the centuries long history of the region. Bulgarian-Macedonian relations set an example for [...] the future of the Balkans.”<sup>725</sup>*

In terms of solving the specific problems that had plagued Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, this interpretation of national purpose for Bulgaria in practice marginalized many of the points of conflictuality. Bulgaria insisted on maintaining a paternalistic tone in its dialogue with Macedonia.<sup>726</sup> Its paternalism, however, was now not based on the assumption of inequality but on the degree of Europeanization. Bulgaria saw itself as an exporter of European experience and expertise<sup>727</sup>, and this is what determined its presumably more advantageous position. It is important to note that despite the paternalistic tone, Bulgaria’s interpretation of bilateral relations had changed in one significant way. It was no longer seen within the brotherhood dialectic (implying the superiority of the ‘older brother’ over the ‘younger brother’). Within the Europeanization discourse Macedonia was seen as a friend:

*“We have achieved some serious progress and we are happy to share our experience with our Macedonian friends;”<sup>728</sup>*

*“[W]ishing peace, stability and prosperity to our Macedonian friends.”<sup>729</sup>*

Given the high degree of conflictuality which the former interpretation had perpetuated, this change is significant.

Overall, the discourse of Europeanization provided a credible positive interpretation of national purpose which in effect reduced national identity conflictuality. Its reading of Bulgarian national identity succeeded in articulating explicit nationalist interpretations as the aberration from normality. By emphasizing the centrality of dialogue, cooperation and

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<sup>725</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>726</sup> Briefing by the speaker of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dimitar Tsanchev on 26th Jul 2006 at <http://www.mfa.bg/en/news/category/4>.

<sup>727</sup> Motif repeatedly occurring in the official bilateral communication in the period 2002-2007 at the level of heads of state and heads of governments.

<sup>728</sup> Pervanov, interview for the Macedonian National Radio on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006.

<sup>729</sup> Pervanov, ‘Ten Years Later’, speech at the Macedonian parliament, Skopje, 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2002.

mutuality, Europeanization discourse upheld the norm of 'European-ness' and positioned conflictuality in contravention to this norm. Thus it enabled the sustainable empowerment of European narratives of identity as hegemonic and re-affirmed the European perspective of Bulgaria and, through it, of the region. The hegemony of Europeanization, in turn, created the condition of possibility for the eventual marginalization of even implicit and legitimate nationalist interpretations of Bulgarian national identity.

### ***Modifications in the Macedonian National Identity Narratives of 'Self'***

The empowerment of the Europeanization discourse in Macedonia took a different course due to the different contexts which structured Macedonia's transition. Breaking up from the federation and declaring independence posed the need for achieving international recognition. On the one hand it delayed Macedonia's bid for (re-)turn to Europe by disabling its capacity to participate in European politics until recognized by all EU members. On the other hand it made the transition process more cumbersome by adding a new dimension to it – the need to re-affirm statehood.

Macedonia's Balkan context also impeded the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse because of the bilateral problems which it conditioned. Conflictuality in the relations with Bulgaria was contained. Other than numerous missed opportunities for increasing regional leverage, it did not involve serious impediments on Macedonia's way to 'Europe' mostly in line with Bulgaria's declarative support for Europeanization of the region. But conflictuality in the relations with Serbia<sup>730</sup> revolved around a long-standing border dispute in the north-west of Macedonia<sup>731</sup> which, together with the unrest in Kosovo and the large numbers of Kosovo refugees, temporarily destabilized peace in the republic. After the change of power in Serbia the dispute was officially resolved in the beginning of 2001<sup>732</sup> but the instability it brought to the country exacerbated domestic

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<sup>730</sup> Then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and still under Milošević.

<sup>731</sup> Mostly but not exclusively along the border with Kosovo.

<sup>732</sup> Border Demarcation Agreement signed by Trajkovski and Kostunica on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2001, see Mile Milenkovski and Jove Talevki, 'Delineation of the State Border between the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin* (Summer 2001), appendix.

inter-ethnic tensions, thus perpetuating micro-nationalisms and preventing progress in the Europeanization processes. Conflictuality in the relations with Greece in its turn also had very serious consequences for the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse. Greek anxiety over Macedonia's national flag and the interpretation of its constitutional provisions<sup>733</sup> was mollified with the interim accord of 1995, which confirmed Greek recognition of Macedonian statehood and allowed Macedonia to formally initiate the process of its European integration. But Greek objections to the republic's constitutional name and the ensuing name dispute negotiations proved more intractable.<sup>734</sup> They delayed Macedonia's progress towards association negotiations and consequently, Macedonia's bid for full EU membership. But, most importantly, they affected the credibility of the Europeanization discourse in Macedonia because of Europe's failure to exert pressure on Greece to reach an agreement. The fact that Greece instrumentalized its influence as a EU member for the purposes of the dispute to threaten Macedonia's future membership and hinder Macedonia's membership negotiations seriously compromised the European Community's standing among Macedonian publics. In effect it questioned the ability of the Europeanization discourse to accommodate the increased salience of the central identity signifiers carried by the notion of 'Macedonian-ness' in the name of the republic. It thus challenged 'Europe's' credible reading of Macedonian national identity.

Macedonia's Albanian context of minority-majority accommodation was another factor which distanced the republic from its European perspective and affected the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse. Indirectly linked to unrest in Kosovo, Albanian insurgency groups in Macedonia brought the republic to a state of civil conflict through most of 2001. Marginalizing the imperatives of everyday politics to give way to the urgent rhetoric of war and peace, the conflict exposed a serious inter-ethnic divide in the state. Reconciling domestic micro-nationalisms became a political priority, which destabilized Macedonia's transition to democracy and postponed its active preparations for EU membership. EU's active role in brokering the peace agreement, however, kept

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<sup>733</sup> Significantly, Art.49 of the Macedonian Constitution.

<sup>734</sup> As confirmed publicly by Greece:

[http://umdiaspora.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=150&Itemid=76](http://umdiaspora.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=150&Itemid=76), also

<http://www.greekembassy.org/Embassy/content/en/Article.aspx?office=1&folder=24&article=18371>.

Macedonia's European perspective in sight and reinstated the relevance of Europeanization discourse to Macedonian politics.<sup>735</sup>

So even though challenged by the specific Macedonian contexts invoking nationalist discourses on micro- and macro-levels, the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse did not cease. On the contrary, in the first years of the new millennium it was seen as a strategic goal and a wide political consensus maintained its domestic relevance. Macedonia's formal application for EU membership submitted in 2004<sup>736</sup> was positively decided on in the end of 2005, when Macedonia officially became a candidate state. In the course of empowering 'Europe' and marginalizing nationalism, the contents of Macedonian national identity acquired a modified reading which promised to decrease its conflictuality.

### *Identity Narratives of Nationhood*

At the beginning of its transition Macedonia attempted to interpret the state community as organized around the notion of national tolerance. This interpretation was meant to reconcile the long-standing Macedonian aspiration for an independent national state with the political impossibility to establish the new state along ethno-national lines. In view of the domestic deterioration of inter-ethnic relations the salience of this signifier dramatically increased precisely because of its absence. It signified what the state community desperately needed in order to preserve its integrity. The centrality of the signifier of 'the nation' interpreted in terms of national tolerance is evident, in the first place, in the frequent and formulaic references to it as the solution of the exacerbating inter-ethnic tensions:

*"Everybody in Macedonia [...] should know that the success of ethnic extremism [...] is the end of peace and stability in the region. [...] This is a deadly blow over inter-ethnic*

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<sup>735</sup> Ohrid Framework Agreement and the EU, see Florian Bieber, 'Conclusions: The Ohrid Framework Agreement after 7 years', in Florian Bieber (ed.), *Power-Sharing and the Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement* (Skopje: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - Office Macedonia, 2008), 207-211.

<sup>736</sup> Just before entering into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

*relations. It can, in a very short time, turn the tolerance which took years to build up into destructive hatred.”*<sup>737</sup>

Securitizing tolerance as highest value ('took years to build') is achieved through establishing a discursive opposition between it and the obvious pernicious consequences of hatred (qualified as 'destructive'). This opposition is re-enforced by announcing the incompatibility of the rhetorical antonym of tolerance – ethnic extremism – with peace and stability. Expanding the negative impact of abandoning national tolerance beyond the borders of the national space to include the 'region' emphasizes in a dramatic manner its central importance as a signifier of national identity. It determines both the domestic stability of the community (its absence is 'a deadly blow over inter-ethnic relations') and the international standing of the state as a key actor in the region.

The salience of the signifier of 'nation' interpreted in terms of national tolerance is also evident in the post-conflict political rationalization of the civil unrest. The conflict is explained exclusively as an attempt to surrender this key signifier of 'Macedonian-ness':

*“The insurgents skilfully used some still open issues and stereotypes and shook the backbone of Macedonian stability, culture and history – inter-ethnic tolerance – to bring the state to the brink of inter-ethnic war.”*<sup>738</sup>

Repeated emphasis on tolerance as a core identity marker re-articulates the community of the Macedonian state in terms of what it lacks, which reveals the discursive centrality of the signifier. Ascribing the insurgency to the contingent instrumentalization of simple 'open issues' and 'stereotypes' and not to deeper underlying problems in the construction of the state is an attempt to diminish its political relevance and re-establish normality. Reference to the intertwinement of inter-ethnic tolerance with the 'backbone' of 'Macedonian-ness' re-enforces this attempt. The established chain of equivalence between the notions of stability, culture and history also serves this purpose. While the salience of culture and history in the construction of Macedonian national identity has been domestically undisputed, that of stability has not. Positioning stability on par with culture

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<sup>737</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 6<sup>th</sup> Mar 2001.

<sup>738</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 2001.



and history is an act of identity constitution which re-affirms the discursive centrality of tolerance.

The idea of national tolerance continues to be increasingly salient not only in the immediate post-conflict period but throughout the first decade of the new millennium. This has to do with the imperatives of national reconciliation and the construction of a credible collective identity at the state level. Upon its return to power in 2006, the democratic party appealed precisely to this imperative. The new prime minister declared his government's priority as 'leading Macedonia forward, in co-existence, tolerance and understanding',<sup>739</sup>.

The salience of this interpretation of Macedonian national identity is upheld by the stronger emphasis placed on inter-ethnic 'dialogue', 'good inter-ethnic relations',<sup>740</sup> and overcoming inter-ethnic 'divisions',<sup>741</sup>. Lending credibility to these notions logically puts forward the necessity of articulating the state community not along national but along civic lines.

*"We need to send a message that Macedonia is a civic community committed to tolerance and co-existence. We showed that we know our way in nurturing our [...] traditional tolerance, developing democracy, respecting human rights and transitioning to market economy."*<sup>742</sup>

The awareness that the community of the state should be organized along civic lines is a major change from the uncertainty articulated at the beginning of Macedonian independent statehood. Connecting civic identity with the idea of tolerance and the key requirements of the transition (functioning democracy, human rights, market economy) enables Macedonia to re-claim its European-ness:

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<sup>739</sup> Gruevski, Utrinski newspaper of 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2006.

<sup>740</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 6<sup>th</sup> Mar 2001.

<sup>741</sup> Gruevski, Utrinski newspaper of 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2006.

<sup>742</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 6<sup>th</sup> Mar 2001.

*“Macedonia develops and supports the multi-culturality of its society within the framework of the [...] civic character of the state.”<sup>743</sup>*

The salience of the idea of national tolerance and its significance for the success of the transition ultimately serve the purpose of advancing Macedonia’s preparation for European integration. They attempt to prove that the state has managed inter-ethnic unrest and left it behind, and is ready to be included in the common European processes. This is how they are related to the empowerment of the discourse of Europeanization.

*“In the end, we are all trying to join the European family, where we belong, with dignity.”<sup>744</sup>*

*“Our duty is to overcome inter-ethnic [...] divisions and demonstrate that Macedonia is ready to take its due place in Europe.”<sup>745</sup>*

*“Macedonia’s determination for European integration [...] has been a key element of its policies from the very start as a consensus among all political parties.”<sup>746</sup>*

*“We are working to fulfil specific standards from our European agenda.”<sup>747</sup>*

The repeated claim that Macedonia belongs to the European ‘family’ and has its ‘due place’ there, the reference to preparation for integration as a ‘key element’ of Macedonian politics, the suggestion that Macedonia’s bid for EU integration constitutes a clear ‘European agenda’, demonstrate that the discourse of Europeanization is being consistently empowered at official state level. The appeal for ‘duty’, the claim for ‘determination’ and ‘consensus’, the notion of ‘dignity’ reveal elements of the political will which maintained the gradual empowerment.

Attaching the interpretation of national tolerance to the signifier of the nation and discursively linking it to the signifiers of ‘Europe’ eventually produced a less conflictual national identity construct at state level. It emphasized Macedonian identity as ‘open to

<sup>743</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 2001.

<sup>744</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 6<sup>th</sup> Mar 2001.

<sup>745</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 2001.

<sup>746</sup> Lubisha Georgievski, speaker of parliament, 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 2006, 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary session.

<sup>747</sup> Buckovski, 26<sup>th</sup> Aug 2006, 2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary session.

the world'<sup>748</sup> and to life with 'the others'<sup>749</sup>. In the bilateral relations with Bulgaria this is illustrated in the gradual normalization of political rhetoric on 'otherness'. In terms of majority-minority relations it led to the gradual detabooization of the idea of a 'Bulgarian' minority, even if not to formal recognition of such. While at the beginning of the transition Bulgarians were never listed by the majority as one of the numerous 'nationalities' inhabiting Macedonia<sup>750</sup>, towards the mid-2000s occasional references to ethnic Bulgarians living in the state became a relatively safe political choice.<sup>751</sup> This is significant, given the inevitable anti-Bulgarianism of Macedonian identity construction from the first years of Macedonian statehood. Uncovering the mechanism of stabilizing the idea of national tolerance as central in Macedonia's national identity in view of Europeanization comes to address the modification.

### *Identity Narratives of Territory*

As with the previous identity signifier, the interpretation of national territory was closely linked to the specific context of Macedonia's transition. In the first years of independence and in view of the imperatives of launching the project of statehood, Macedonian identity politics revolved around the idea of belonging to 'Macedonia' as 'land' and, consequently, around the centrality of the 'Macedonian' denominator in domestic affairs. In the context of overcoming international isolation and inter-ethnic division, these interpretations were gradually marginalized to give way to less antagonistic narratives of identity. In order to stabilize Macedonia's regional standing and in order to make progress in Macedonia's European integration aspirations, Macedonia needed to send clear messages about its commitment to respecting the Balkan territorial status quo. Most significantly this implied a guarantee for non-intervention in the domestic affairs of neighbouring states in view of minority status promotion. The imperative of improving relations with neighbours led to providing such guarantees in the bilateral state communication with Greece<sup>752</sup> and

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<sup>748</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 2001.

<sup>749</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 2001.

<sup>750</sup> When they were mentioned, it was by Albanian minority representatives.

<sup>751</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> Oct 2006 parliament (e.g. Vesna Janeska).

<sup>752</sup> The interpretation of Art.49 of the Constitution in the Interim Accords of 1995 with Greece.

Bulgaria<sup>753</sup>. Retreating from the vision of maintaining active links with adjacent parts of geographical Macedonia notably decreased the external conflictuality of Macedonian national identity. It shifted the focus on the current sovereign territory of Macedonia, marginalizing historical narratives of belonging, and re-interpreted Macedonian national territory in terms of completeness and integrity.

The dynamics of bridging domestic inter-ethnic divides upheld a similar interpretation of territory. The problems along the north-western border and the Albanian insurgency put Macedonia's territorial integrity under actual threat. In the prospect of having to surrender sovereignty over part of the state territory towards Kosovo or to profoundly transform the form of statehood to acknowledge internal divisions as autonomous territories or federation, Macedonian politics swiftly turned to securitizing territorial integrity as a priority. The suggestion that Macedonian statehood could renounce unitarism and devolve into a federation was interpreted as the worse-case scenario. It was articulated through the ideas of 'fission' and 'breakdown'<sup>754</sup>. Unitarism, on the other hand, was articulated in terms of 'security' and 'stability'<sup>755</sup>. Securitizing the form of statehood is re-enforced by another rhetorical strategy. Official Macedonian rhetoric consistently links unitary statehood to the individual as a referent object of security. It is repeatedly being suggested that surrendering unitarism should have serious negative impact on the 'peace and serenity of all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia'<sup>756</sup>, on the 'serenity of every household' and on the 'tranquility of our children'<sup>757</sup>. By directly engaging the individual into the cause of defending unitary statehood and territorial integrity, Macedonian politics definitively articulated them as central in the national identity of the state.

In view of Macedonia's long-awaited and quite recent independent statehood, the increased salience of territorial integrity and unitarism is unsurprising. Preserving the integrity and the unitary form of the state, however, posed the imperative of national reconciliation. The successful accommodation of the demands of the Albanian political

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<sup>753</sup> The provision in the same tone in the Joint Declaration of 1999 with Bulgaria.

<sup>754</sup> Radmila Shekerinska, 26<sup>th</sup> Aug 2006, parliament 2<sup>nd</sup> session.

<sup>755</sup> Buckovski, 26<sup>th</sup> Aug 2006, parliament 2<sup>nd</sup> session.

<sup>756</sup> Trajkovski, 71<sup>st</sup> plenary session, 6<sup>th</sup> Mar 2001.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*

representation for fair participation in the project of statehood demanded shifting the focus on 'Macedonian-ness' as a central signifier of state identity and emphasizing instead togetherness and participation.<sup>758</sup> Such interpretation of state identity concurred with the signifiers of 'Europe'. This ensured its salience in the course of empowering the Europeanization discourse. The significance of borders, for instance, was visibly transformed in this sense. Despite the insistence on their fixedness<sup>759</sup>, borders were re-articulated in the context of national reconciliation and Europeanization as open and transparent.

*"In a time when all European borders are falling, [ethnic extremists] want to erect new, ethnic borders. [This] demand for ethnically pure territories is motivated by [...] racism and hatred."*<sup>760</sup>

Renouncing the ethnic divisions in the state, the president uncovers the incompatibility of 'bordering' Macedonia with its European orientation and the integration processes in Europe.

*"The only option which we stand behind is European and transparent borders in the region."*<sup>761</sup>

This declaration is sustainably maintained in the advancement of Macedonia's transition. In the context of border control and border management as a prerequisite for EU candidacy, the legislative framework on the subject is over-determined in view of 'European standards'<sup>762</sup> and the permeability of borders for 'people, goods, and capital'<sup>763</sup>:

*"[The aim is to] ensure European standards and the conditions for having ever more open borders."*<sup>764</sup>

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<sup>758</sup> Trajkovski, Buckovski, Gruevski.

<sup>759</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 2001.

<sup>760</sup> Trajkovski, parliamentary address on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 2001.

<sup>761</sup> Trajkovski, 71<sup>st</sup> plenary session, 6<sup>th</sup> Mar 2001.

<sup>762</sup> Discussion on the bill on police in its section on border police 26<sup>th</sup> Oct 2006, 6<sup>th</sup> plenary session.

<sup>763</sup> And impermeability for criminality, plenary session 3<sup>rd</sup> plenary session, 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 2006.

<sup>764</sup> Lubisha Georgievski, 3<sup>rd</sup> plenary session, 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 2006.

The idea of 'open-ness' towards the outside world is a significant transformation in the interpretation of Macedonian national identity. In stark contrast with the nationalist interpretations of 'besieged' territory from the early years of independence, Macedonia now articulated its statehood as open towards the immediate national 'Other(s)'. This is evident in the way the neighbours are positioned in terms of Macedonia's strategic future:

*"In its aspiration for EU membership [...] Macedonia is fortunate to soon have two neighbours, Greece and Bulgaria, who are EU members and should be able to help us, too, realize our objective, on which the political parties and the citizens of this state are in consensus."*<sup>765</sup>

The rhetoric of bilateral partnership and mutual assistance in the preparations for EU membership has been an indispensable element of Bulgarian-Macedonian inter-state communication after 1999. Its appearance in Macedonia's domestic discursive space has not been as frequent. Referring to Greece in terms of 'good fortune' has been even rarer. This is why the modification of the interpretation of borders as an opportunity to connect rather than as a dividing line is novel. It suggests a decrease in the conflictuality of the external projections of Macedonian national identity.

#### *Identity Narratives of Purpose*

The modified interpretation of the signifier of national purpose also opens up Macedonian national identity towards the 'Other(s)'. Nationalist rhetoric of victimization and vindication through independent statehood, characteristic of the early transition, placed the political emphasis on the realization of the 'Self'. The project of independence was meant to assert Macedonian national identity as a legitimate state. In contrast, the rhetoric of the late transition, already guided by the strategic goal of European integration, interpreted Macedonian identity through its role in the region. In this sense the articulation of national purpose included the immediate 'Other(s)' in a non-antagonistic manner, as participants in the regional community of states. Having achieved independent statehood and having preserved the integrity of the new state, Macedonia turned to 'Europe' as a way to stabilize the fundament of its statehood project. European integration

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<sup>765</sup> Vesna Janevska, 6<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct 2006.

offered a model of non-national governance which the post-Ohrid Macedonian state could subscribe to.<sup>766</sup>

In order to articulate this inherent compatibility, Macedonian politics had to marginalize internal conflictuality and emphasize stability and predictability.<sup>767</sup> Thus the interpretation of national purpose began to focus on Macedonia's role as a key to the stability of the region.

*"Macedonia acquired broad international support for its policies and re-affirmed itself as a pivot of stability in the region.[...] Destabilizing Macedonia will challenge the new climate and legitimate aspirations for peaceful and prosperous Balkans."*<sup>768</sup>

At the level of head of government, this interpretation remained a central theme in the articulation of national purpose. Upon his stepping in office, the new Macedonian prime minister from the right is being advised by his predecessor from the left to 'continue building up the image of Macedonia as a factor of stability and a regional leader'<sup>769</sup>. Announcing Macedonia's regional standing as a factual confirmation of identity building rhetoric ('continue building up the image of [...] a regional leader') serves the purpose of increasing its credibility. This discursive strategy is applied consistently in the period in order to essentialize the assumption of leadership:

*"Never has Macedonia been as respected as now because we had a stance, we had an active policy, we had an active position [on Kosovo]."*<sup>770</sup>

The articulation of Macedonian national identity in the region in terms of agency also increases the credibility of the particular interpretation of purpose. This is in contrast with the passivity of the victimization discourse from the beginning of transition. Macedonia's leadership positions the state as a master of its own destiny. This interpretation is emancipatory and optimistic – it is oriented towards the future:

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<sup>766</sup> This idea is more frequently voiced by the Albanian political representation, see for instance Aziz Polozhani during the 12<sup>th</sup> parliamentary session on 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006.

<sup>767</sup> Often constructed as a 'predictable partner' in the rhetoric of the prime-minister.

<sup>768</sup> Trajkovski, 6<sup>th</sup> Mar 2001.

<sup>769</sup> Buckovski towards Gruevski in his address in parliament on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug 2006.

<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.*

*“Everything is in our hands. We should try to see not what the international community can do for us [but what we can do for ourselves]. We are members of the international community. We have the chance but time does not wait – the decision of the European Union will not wait.”<sup>771</sup>*

Already as an EU candidate state, Macedonia asserts its interpretation of national purpose in a forward manner and in optimistic terms. Positioning itself as a full member of the international community, the republic demonstrates detachment from the frustrations of the past. Historically antagonistic relations are now interpreted as opportunities. Albania, Greece and Bulgaria are seen as a bridge towards realizing Macedonia’s European aspiration:

*“[The new government] should promptly establish contacts with both Berisha and Stanishev, it should also try again with Karamanlis, perhaps to better ends.”<sup>772</sup>*

Seeing the prime ministers of neighbouring states in terms of pragmatic politics and not as adversaries, despite the various degree of conflictuality which still strained bilateral relations, is an indication of the transformation in the interpretation of national purpose. Macedonian national identity has been determined by its European orientation, so conflictual interpretations of nationalism should be transcended. It is this articulation of purpose that enabled the process of marginalizing nationalism from the Macedonian national identity construction.

In view of this modification, the uniqueness of Macedonian identity is over-determined in positive terms. The historical myths of uniqueness give way to a new mythologization of Macedonia’s regional standing. It is centred around the story of ‘the most successful fairytale on the Balkans’ and the ‘small regional miracle’<sup>773</sup>. What enabled the upholding of these new myths was Macedonia’s claim for having preserved ‘the peace’<sup>774</sup>. Against the background of war-torn Kosovo, and previously Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, this claim sounds credible. Even though not entirely correct, it allowed the re-narration of Macedonian

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<sup>771</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>772</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>773</sup> In the words of the prime minister Buckovski in parliament on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug 2006.

<sup>774</sup> Lubisha Georgievski, parliamentary address on 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 2006.



identity as unique and positive. In this narrative, the 2001 inter-ethnic turmoil is re-told not as a 'conflict' but as a 'crisis situation, resolved politically'<sup>775</sup>. The incompatibility of ethno-political conflict with the discourse of Europeanization determined this narrative turn.

The modification of the interpretation of national purpose in the late Macedonian transition is closely linked to Macedonia's strategic objective of European integration. The imperative of making sense of the most recent event in the chronology of the Macedonian state – inter-ethnic conflict – in view of Macedonia's European aspirations produced a more open, more optimistic, and less nationalistic interpretation of national purpose. Unlike Bulgaria, where the aspiration for integration came with the inertia of the 'refolutions'<sup>776</sup> in the rest of Central and South-Eastern Europe, Macedonia turned to 'Europe' after the first wave of applicant states had launched their negotiations. This had to do with the delay in achieving recognition. In the meanwhile, it got caught in the turmoil of inter-ethnic tension, which seriously destabilized its statehood project from within. While attempting to restore stability, Macedonia's leadership cultivated the awareness that the painful process of re-constituting statehood and transcending nationalist interpretations of national identity were meant to reform the state as truly 'European'. In this sense, European incentives in the form of declarations of support<sup>777</sup> or visa liberalization agreements<sup>778</sup> significantly re-enforced the power of the Europeanization discourse in Macedonia. Failure to provide such incentives, on the other hand, promised to affect the credibility of the 'European' reading of Macedonian identity.

### ***Comparing Modifications in Identity Narratives of 'Self'***

As demonstrated above, modifications in national identity patterns and transformations of national identity narratives in the two states are linked to understanding the contingent

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<sup>775</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>776</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern* (NY: Vintage Books, 1993).

<sup>777</sup> Such as the declarations of Germany's support, Deutsche Welle quoting Angela Merkel's declaration of support: 'Germany is very interested in the successful outcome of Macedonia's application' on 17<sup>th</sup> Oct 2006.

<sup>778</sup> As expected by Macedonia by the end of 2006, *ibid.*

political contexts in which they operated. Contexts were very different in Bulgaria and in Macedonia, and so were the national identity patterns they produced. Despite the often similar contents of identity signifiers, the discursive positions of the national subjects differed significantly (Table 13). The different relations established between the various discursive elements in the two identity constructions re-produced different outcomes. The notion of 'territorial integrity', for instance, appears as a central interpretation of the signifier of national territory at the beginning of Bulgaria's transition and towards the end of Macedonia's. Its implications, however, are very different in the two cases. While in Bulgaria territorial integrity was upheld as a signifier of nationalist discourse, in Macedonia it signified Europeanization and detachment from nationalism. Similar dynamics is detectable in the changed interpretations of nationhood (in terms of 'unity' and 'tolerance') and national purpose (in terms of 'centrality' and 'contribution'). This observation confirms the validity of the assumption that the specific contents of the signifiers of identity is contingent and ultimately accidental. Its meaning emerges on the basis of relations to other signifiers within the discursive limits, established through hegemonic articulations. This assumption points to the direct dependency of national identity narratives on the political and sees identity change as a function of that. From this perspective national identity change is not only conceivable, it is inevitable in a changed discursive context. The empowerment of Europeanization invoked such a change.

What enabled this outcome was placing strategic priority in both Bulgaria and Macedonia to inclusion into the dynamics of European integration and the subsequent empowerment of the Europeanization discourse. In this context nationalist reading of identity lost relevance and credibility. Embarking upon the road to 'Europe', the two states re-articulated their national identities in such a way, that nationalist interpretations were gradually marginalized. Over-determining national identity within the discourse of Europeanization positioned the state as a participant in a supra-national community of states. This challenged the constraining power of nation-state borders and offered national identity a significantly wider and more inclusive discursive space. The position of constitutive 'otherness' shifted from the immediate national 'Other(s)' to the projected borders of the community. In view of this re-positioning, the salience of certain

interpretations of identity signifiers which had been centred around difference, such as the notion of national unity, the narrative of vindication, the encapsulating role of state borders, gradually decreased. It was substituted by an increased emphasis on commonality and tolerance, and accentuating inclusive dimensions of difference. Accommodated within the discourse of Europeanization, national identity narratives appeared less antagonistic, more optimistic, and more positive. The credibility of this interpretation and its self-enhancing function in turn stabilized the hegemony of Europeanization as the discourse which upheld the new reading of national identity.

State Community	National Identity Narratives of Self		
	Nation	Territory	Purpose
Bulgaria	National unity: -ethnic→national→ European political parties; -increased salience of 'national' values such as good neighbourly relations, cooperation, trust; -re-definition of the 'national interest' to include well-being of neighbours, the region and Europe.	Territorial integrity: -decreased salience of national borders as a barrier; -increased salience of borders as a 'door' to Europe; -negotiability of the Constitution; -selling land to foreigners.	Centrality on the Balkans: - contribution; -stability factor; -exporter of stability; -dialogue; -example ; -re-negotiation of the brothers/friends relationship with Macedonia.
Macedonia	National tolerance: -increased salience of the signifier of tolerance as the pivot of Macedonian stability; -civic community, emphasis on dialogue, good inter- ethnic relations, overcoming inter-ethnic divisions; -openness to the world.	Territorial belonging: -territorial integrity; -unitary state; -gradual detachment from the notion of 'severed whole'; - relaxation of the insistence on 'Macedonian-ness' in domestic politics; -borders: transparent and European BUT -fixed and unchanging.	Victimization narrative: -Sovereignty; -the most successful fairytale; -key to stability in the region; -maintaining peace.

Table 13. Changed Patterns of National Identity: Bulgaria and Macedonia.



# CONCLUSION

## CHAPTER IX

### EUROPEANIZATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY CHANGE

This study of national identity in Europe and its transformation within the discourse of Europeanization was originally inspired by an empirical puzzle: the perpetual salience of national identity narratives in the realm of European politics. Against the background of deepening, widening, and expanding integration in Europe, it appears somewhat paradoxical that the stories of the nation should maintain their salience. The paradox comes from the inherent tension that seems to exist between the discourse of Europeanization as a space of commonality of many nations, and narratives of national identity dividing the common space into many separate 'national' spaces.

#### ***Argument***

But approaching national identity from the theoretical and meta-theoretical perspective of poststructuralist discourse theory points to its central position within the grand discourse of nationalism – the totalizing system of meaning which stabilizes our political world and our collective identities as national subjects in it. Discourse theory allows an understanding of nationalism that is far from the traditional view of it as an ideology of extremism. Positioning nationalism as a grand discourse upheld by the story of the nation as the story of the state, discourse theory reveals the relevance of nationalism to all politics in Europe (and beyond). It suggests that in the world of nation-states national identity will always function as an overarching background identity whose salience is related to the imperatives of political mobilization. Linking the individual to sovereign power in a way that is pre-given and binding, national identity enables the interpellation of national subjects for the purposes of national politics. The 'national' stories repeatedly told about

the people and the world they inhabit essentialize this link, providing legitimacy to sovereignty emanating from the nation to the state.

The project of integration in Europe set out to change this order. It significantly modified the principles of sovereign power. As a consequence, the human collectivity which sovereignty governed began to transform. The stories told about it imagined it no longer as a nation but as a community of nations. These stories emphasized commonality and fostered unity in difference. Their (re-)production articulated political reality as a shared discursive space no longer threatened by 'otherness'. The 'Other(s)' were pushed beyond its boundaries and outside the discursive space of commonality they demarkated. This shared discursive space, however, continued to be inhabited by national subjects because integration continued to occur within the constraints of the sovereign nation-states. Sovereignty was only pooled to the extent to which nation-states negotiated it. So the national stories – the narratives of national identity – remained within the discursive limits of Europeanization. In the changing discursive contexts they also began to transform in order to re-position the national subjects and over-determine their identities. The progress of European integration and the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse in this sense re-activated their political relevance. Nationalist discourse, whose centre they formed, clashed with the discourse of Europeanization precisely in its divergent interpretations of national identity. This is how national identity appeared to be a central element of the European project. The outcome of the hegemonic struggle over its meanings has the potential to determine the future of European integration by either asserting Europeanization's discursive power to tell a new story or compromising it. Thus, the reading of national identity narratives within the discourse of 'Europe' becomes the touchstone of Europeanization.

### ***Methodology***

It is on the basis of this assumption that the current dissertation turned to explore national identity transformation in Europe. The investigation focused on the context of EU Enlargement because of the significant changes which it invoked within the limits of the

discourse of Europeanization and within the limits of the discourse of nationalism. Change in discursive contexts re-activates identity articulation practices and highlights the political relevance of national identity narratives. This dynamics would not have been as visible in traditional EU member-states, even though the context of EU Enlargement significantly impacted their national identity (re-)production practices, too. But because of the particular historical context in which the European integration project was conceived, the core of integrating Europe had marginalized 'nationalism' as illicit. 'Nationalism', as interpreted by the classical works in the field, had ceased to be a legitimate political project in the European Community (even though nationalism, as seen here through the lenses of poststructuralist discourse theory, never lost political relevance). But in the periphery of Europe where the fall of communism produced a normative void in the organizing principles of statehood, 'nationalism' became a legitimate, oppositional, emancipatory agenda for re-building statehood from the rubble of the totalitarian state. At the same time, the former communist states denounced communism as the 'wall' that had separated them from 'Europe'. They were eager to catch up with the common European processes and 'return' to Europe, which opened up their national spaces to the discourse of Europeanization and stimulated its empowerment. In this sense, the hegemonic struggle over the purpose of statehood (and the meaning of social reality) between the discourse of nationalism and the discourse of Europeanization occurred there in a much more open and visible manner than it was occurring at the time in traditional Europe. In many ways this struggle resembled the early years of the European project and pointed to the underlying principles of European integration. The clashes of this discursive struggle became a central part of the complex democratic transition and a legitimate element of the political process. Therefore, the dynamics of reading national identity and reproducing its narratives in the hegemonic struggle over meaning appeared much more visible in the context of EU Enlargement, outside the discursive space of the traditional Community. This is what pointed to it as a context for the current investigation.

From the realm of post-communism and in the context of EU Enlargement, the investigation turned to the Balkan region. This analytical choice was prompted, again, by the visibility of national identity re-negotiation in the Balkans, but also by the presumably

heightened antagonistic potential of national identity there. The region is widely seen as offering most difficult cases of Europeanization of national identity. This is important because the dissertation is ultimately framed within a wider research interest: exploring the possibility of marginalizing identity-based conflictuality in Europe. Therefore, studying a habitually conflictual region to investigate the discursive effects of Europeanization promises more relevant conclusions about the mechanism of identity change, than a historically peaceful region relatively free of identity-based antagonisms.

At the same time, studying the extreme cases of (inter-)national conflict would be counter-productive for the above purposes because the politics of conflict differ significantly from the course of the political process under the condition of formal peace. They characterize a crisis situation and are not necessarily symptomatic of the re-negotiation of the meaning of identity under 'normal' politics. This is why the analysis selected two Balkan states which, even though caught in an antagonistic relationship, did not come into violent conflict. In this sense, the political function of national identity narratives studied in Bulgaria and in Macedonia is more similar to that in the rest of the European states. The analysis should therefore have wider applicability than a study of extreme cases of identity conflict.

Methodologically, the investigation was constructed as a comparative case study over two states. This choice was analytically justified in view of the complexity of the identity-building dynamics. The dissertation aimed to enhance understanding of national identity transformation at the macro-level – the state. Isolating one axis from the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic in which identity emerges enabled a reasonable balance between feasibility and detail. Focusing on one state only would have been insufficient in view of exploring the discursive positions of 'Self' and 'Other' at the level of the state. Selecting more than two states, on the other hand, would have significantly complicated the task of incorporating the identity-building dynamics into a methodologically viable research design. This is what suggested working with two states. For the purposes of understanding the effects of Europeanization on the divisive potential of national identity narratives, however, these two states could not have been selected randomly. In the construction and articulation of national identity, some 'Others', often the immediate 'Others', play more central roles



than the rest. Thus, certain axes in the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic would be more salient than others. Selecting one of these central axes, therefore, promised to reveal more about identity than the infinite number of possible others which account for the identity construction. In view of the particular historical contexts which shaped them, Bulgarian-Macedonian relations happened to delineate one such central axis in the identity building dynamics. Studying national identity narratives along these relations formed the empirical part of the dissertation.

The investigation looked at the most salient stories told about the nation and its subjects in the context of Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, and selected six narrative groups which were identifiable in both states. They also form, predictably, part of most national identity constructs: stories about nationhood, territory, purpose, statehood, language, minorities. Despite the very specific local contexts in which these narrative groups uphold national identity, their almost universal presence in the construction of the 'nation' points to the basis of comparability and inference from the conclusions of this investigation. Applying discourse analysis, the investigation attempted to break down the selected narratives into their constitutive elements. It identified their structuring centres – territory, language, minority – and aimed to capture the dynamics of fixing their meanings. Inevitably, articulation of meaning is made possible in establishing relations between the various discursive elements. In national identity narratives this dynamics generates discursive practices of articulating the discursive positions of 'Self' and 'Other' in relation to each other. Attempting to deny the contingent nature of such identity articulation requires perpetual over-determination of the subject positions through continuous re-narration of the story. Unsurprisingly, changing political contexts, actors and imperatives affect the process of re-narration. Identifying these was thus the analytical starting point of de-constructing the narrative.

Focusing on one discursive element at one point in time, the investigation attempted to follow the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic which eventually produced the meaning of identity narratives. It looked for hegemonic articulations of the subject positions in view of that discursive element. The meaning of nationhood, for example, was partially fixed in discursive practices of categorization, exclusion, subordination: 'We are brothers', 'They

are occupiers', 'They forgot who they were'. Interested in the function of national identity as collective state identity, the analysis looked for such articulations at the macro-level. It aimed to establish what could legitimately be said about national identity by the state.

This dissertation studied what happened to national identity with integration in Europe. It aimed to explore how national identity narratives changed with the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse and how this affected the way the community of the state was being imagined. In order to determine the transformation, the analysis attempted to identify differences in the stories told before and after the empowerment of Europeanization. The process of empowering 'Europe' began during the post-communist transition. The analyzed points in time are selected within its timeframe. The selection was guided by the increased political salience of certain discursive elements from the national identity narratives. Articulating the meaning of language in the national story, for instance, was more intensive in the period of the so called language dispute between Bulgaria and Macedonia. Looking at interpretations of language when the dispute began and after its resolution revealed different subject positions linked to changed discursive contexts. Highlighting the discursive dynamics of subject re-positioning pointed to the mechanisms of identity change in the process of empowering Europeanization discourse.

To be able to draw valid conclusions about these mechanisms, the investigation followed the dynamics of subject re-positioning around six key discursive elements from the national identity constructs. To be able to fully grasp the implications of this dynamics, it traced variations in interpretations both within and across the narrative unit. Identifying differences in the interpretation of the analyzed elements pointed to modifications in the national identity narratives. These modifications revealed how imagining the state community had changed in the course of Europeanization. Three aspects of the change stood out.

## **Conclusions**

The first significant aspect concerns the general re-orientation of the national identity construct. Traditionally, national identity narratives are discursively bound to the stories of the past. By upholding a particular version of history, they attempt to mythologize the emergence of the nation, essentialize its boundaries and articulate it as primordial and organic. But Europeanization is not concerned with the history of national communities. Its political focus is the prospects for cooperation between them in the present and for the future. Its discursive space is centred around the possibilities of the future. The national stories it tells are therefore inherently optimistic: they are looking into the realm of the achievable. National identity within the discourse of Europeanization is open for re-negotiation, it is not pessimistically bound to the past. Examined in its inward effects, this discursive feature of Europeanization has at least two significant implications for the self-enhancement function of national identity narratives. First, it adds credibility to the belief that the traumas of the past can be healed. In the context of decommunization (and decades earlier in the aftermath of Nazi atrocities) this discursive feature accounted for the increased political relevance of the European project and its political appeal. Looking into the wider context of European politics, this feature of the Europeanization discourse also determines its political relevance to re-building post-conflict societies from the 'New' Europe, which still stand outside the active realm of Europeanization. Second, the relative detachment of the European discourse from past dependencies expands the scope of the politically possible: despite failures in the past, Europeanization points to a prosperous, secure future that is achievable now, through political decisions in the present. This optimistic narrative has a visible self-enhancement effect on the national stories, which proves particularly appealing in times of political change, insecurity and crisis. Unlike pessimistic nationalist interpretations which constantly revert back to the past, national identity within the discourse of Europeanization seems significantly more credible as a source of collective identification with the state. Moreover, this interpretation makes the integration project an indispensable element of the political future of the state.

Re-orienting national identity narratives from the past to the present and future highlights the second aspect of the transformation induced with the empowerment of Europeanization, this time pointing outwards to the space of 'otherness'. By de-emphasizing the political relevance of the stories of the past, the discursive space of 'Europe' enables transcending historical antagonisms through their gradual discursive marginalization. Directing political debate to the possibilities of the future and the consequences of missing them facilitates the detachment of everyday politics from their dependency upon past conflicts. This allows the gradual re-positioning of the previous malevolent 'Other(s)' as participants in a common undertaking. Dressed in the language of the national interest and the common good, this re-positioning in effect changes the 'Self'- 'Other' dialectic of identity narration. The discursive space of Europeanization imagines an inclusive community of nations freed from the burden of conflict. Most importantly, Europeanization sees the boundaries of this community as open to (re)negotiation. In the context of (ethno-)national tension (just as in the post-war division of Europe), the possibility of negotiating differences and leaving them behind promises closure to past antagonisms. Nationalism as a grand discourse is unable to make such promise. Within its hegemony, the divisions between former antagonists often seem unsurmountable. State behaviour governed by the meanings of nationalism is constrained by past antagonisms and bound to reproduce the divisions. The possibility offered by the Europeanization discourse to break these constraints accounts for much of the appeal of European integration as a political project.

European integration's focus on negotiating differences accounted for the third dimension of the discursive effects induced by 'Europe'. It highlighted pragmatic interpretations of commonality over ideational interpretations of difference. This discursive re-construction is significant in at least two ways. First, it shifts the normative focus of politics. Nationalism often operates in the normative spectrum of right and wrong. It attaches political meanings to ideas about justice, mission, and vindication. These ideas can easily be translated into the language of politics in times of crisis but sit uncomfortably in the routine of everyday politics. Europeanization, on the other hand, predominantly occupies the normative field of what is rationally beneficial. Its normative focus is mutual benefit

seen in pragmatic terms. Interpreting political meanings in the pragmatic language of mutual benefit has the advantage of signifying normality: politics no longer revolves around defeating adversaries or averting crises; it is predictable and institutionalized. Second, the discursive re-construction induced by the empowerment of Europeanization permits radical repositioning of the national subjects. Subverting nationalism's discursive logic of identity articulation which attempts to essentialize uniqueness, the discourse of Europeanization is empowered through discursive practices of emphasizing similarities. In the context of deepening, widening and expanding integration, this discursive feature prompts, and indeed requires, the marginalization of antagonistic interpretations of identity and decreases the political relevance of nationalist discourse which upholds them. Advancing pragmatic politics of cooperation based on commonality interprets similar national identities as a source of political agency in the project of European integration. In this sense national identity narratives of commonality become a central discursive element of Europeanization and increase its political relevance. Europeanization's effect on national identity is thus very emancipatory. It liberates the national subjects from the normative constraints imposed on them by the stories of the past and enables them to act in the name of their own good as they see it today.

Empowering the Europeanization discourse significantly re-structured the discursive contexts of identity articulation. Nationalism had articulated national identity as deterministic, conflict-driven and disabling long-term cooperation. Upholding such an identity as the central source of political agency had significantly compromised it as a source of collective identity at state level, revealing its antagonistic, divisive potential. In Europe, this had been acknowledged in the conception of the project of integration, which challenged the way nationalism interpreted the political world. Establishing the key aspects of the discursive transformation induced by the discourse of Europeanization on the interpretation of national identity confirmed the central argument of this dissertation. National identity narratives read within the discursive contours of Europeanization appear more credible as stories of the state because they uphold a self-enhancing, non-antagonistic, emancipating vision of national subjectivity, framed within an optimistic vision for the future. Moreover, this reading of national identity appears as a central

signifying element of the discourse of Europeanization, determining its discursive hegemony. Indeed, where the credibility of 'European' interpretations faltered, nationalism restored its hegemony and challenged the political relevance of the integration project. In this sense, the ability of the Europeanization discourse to capture the central signifiers of nationalism and fill them with its own meanings, determines its credibility in reading national identity. The current dissertation aimed to investigate the mechanisms of this discursive transformation and seek its implications for European politics. The analysis of the empirical findings indicated the discursive logic which enabled the transformation.

### ***Discursive Logic of Accommodation***

Working in the context of EU Enlargement, the dissertation traced Europeanization's 'reading' of national identity in six narrative groups over two states. It selected states which had just shed their totalitarian regimes and had turned to the project of European integration as an overarching strategic goal of their democratic transitions. It is setting up this goal that initiated the empowerment of the discourse of Europeanization in the first place. Inevitably, Europeanization's ability to articulate alternative meanings to the central elements sustaining the national narratives depended on the structural features of the changing discursive contexts which characterized the transitions in the two studied states. A variety of factors, both domestic and external, influenced the progress of the transition and the pace of the process of Europeanization in the two states. It is beyond the epistemological purpose of this dissertation to explore causality in them, since the explanatory value of such undertaking is deemed to stretch little beyond the specific context. This dissertation focused instead on understanding the discursive logic behind upholding one interpretation of meaning over another and what they told us about nationalism, about Europeanization, about integration and about the nation. Nevertheless, identifying the various elements which conditioned the varying discursive power of Europeanization in the studied states seems relevant as a contribution to understanding this particular fragment of Balkan politics.

Tracing the interpretation of similar elements in the discursive patterns of identity diachronically in the two states demonstrated that variations were linked to the formal progress of integration. The meaning of national territory, for example, transformed significantly with the advancement of membership negotiations in Bulgaria. The idea of a closely guarded territory whose integrity was to be protected at any cost was gradually replaced with the belief in open borders and the aspiration to guard a much larger territorial space: 'Europe'. In Macedonia, the interpretation of national territory as part of a 'severed whole' was gradually marginalized to emphasize the legitimacy of the current territorial *status quo* and to protect it. Very different in themselves, the variations in the national narratives in both states eventually upheld a less antagonistic national identity story in terms of the internal and external 'Others'. The formal progress of integration, however, took different courses in the two states.

This, in its turn, was linked to a combination of domestic and international factors, among which the political configuration in power, the modalities of majority-minority accommodation, the problems arising from the regional context (Figure 6). These factors ultimately determined the political consensus on 'Europe', as well as the specific incentives provided by 'Europe' to stimulate such consensus. Where the domestic political outcomes did not favour immediate progress in the process of integration, the credibility of Europeanization's reading of national identity decreased. Comparing the two states under study here, the problem of Macedonia's international legal subjectivity impeded by Greek non-recognition stands out as one such outcome. Significantly slowing down Macedonia's integration efforts, it reduced the political relevance of integration and re-enforced the credibility of nationalist interpretations of identity. The prolonged stay in power of the former communists in Bulgaria, compromising the legitimacy of the post-communist transition, stands out as another example of such domestic outcome. Impeding successful reforms, it prevented progress towards membership negotiation and decreased the political relevance of Europeanization. As soon as membership negotiations began after a domestic change of power, the discourse of Europeanization began to stabilize and was able to produce more credible readings of national identity narratives.

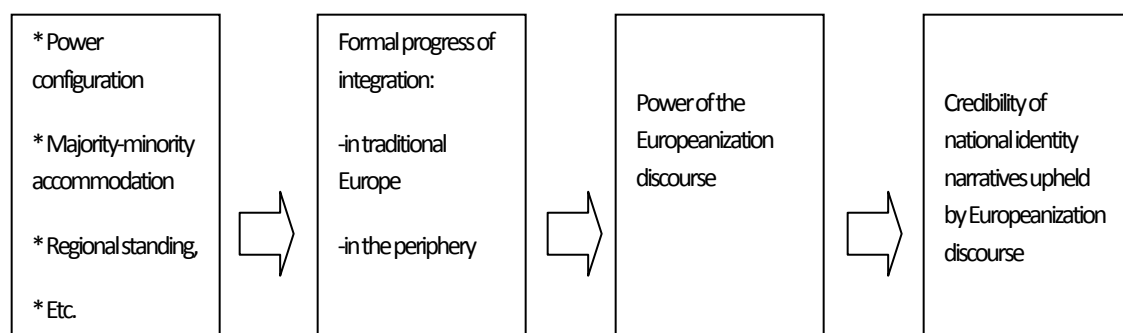


Figure 6. Credibility of National Identity Narratives within Europeanization: Discursive Logic.

Having established the logic of this discursive dynamics, the investigation then followed it synchronically in the two states in the interpretations of one and the same discursive elements structuring bilateral relations. Identifying variations in the articulation of their meanings in Bulgaria and in Macedonia enabled checking these variations against the progress of integration in the two states. The analysis largely confirmed the discursive logic presented in Figure 6 above. Where political consensus on the relevance of Europeanization failed – in the context of staggering integration efforts – nationalist interpretations resumed their salience and re-produced antagonisms in the bilateral relations. Detached from the discourse of Europeanization, Bulgaria's recognition of Macedonian statehood, for instance, was interpreted as a national threat in both Bulgaria and Macedonia. With the opening up of the national spaces towards the integration processes in Europe, however, this interpretation was marginalized to give way to constructive articulations on the act of recognition. But while in Bulgaria this happened almost immediately with the first 'European' steps of the state, Macedonia had to wait in isolation before it could initiate inter-state dialogue with the European states. The remarkable domestic silence on Bulgaria's presumably amicable act of recognition testifies to this discursive vacuum. Against its background, the only interpretations of it, though irrelevant, were provided by the discourse of nationalism, which asserted its hegemonic presence in Macedonian politics. Very similar discursive dynamics characterized interpretations of language in the different stages of the bilateral language dispute. At the very beginning of Europeanization in the region, language was interpreted as a central feature of national identity and compromises with it were seen as an immediate identity



threat. With the gradual empowerment of Europeanization, marked most significantly by the election of democratic governments in both states, the European interpretation of culture as a field of commonality and mutual complementation affected the salience of language as an identity signifier and facilitated the resolution of the language dispute. 'European' reading of national identity enabled reconciliation, thus increasing the credibility of identity as the story of the state and stabilizing the discursive space which upheld it.

This outcome was observed despite the divergent interpretations of the identity narratives in the specific national/state contexts. Subscribing to the discourse of Europeanization resulted in different, often even contradictory, meanings attached to one and the same discursive element in the two states. But the implications of these meanings for the way the national/state community was being seen were generally quite similar: decreased antagonism along national lines, increased relevance of the integration project. This is significant not only because it empirically supports the central argument of this dissertation. It also points to a novel approach to understanding European politics, both within and outside the realm of the European project. More on this will be said towards the end of this chapter.

Despite the accelerated progress of integration and the visible salience of Europeanization discourse, however, the credibility of 'European' interpretations remained low around certain discursive elements. This empirical finding seemed to contradict the logic of the discursive dynamics described above. It suggested that Europeanization's reading of national identity did not depend only upon empowering Europeanization discourse. Detecting increased salience of nationalist interpretations of identity around one and the same discursive element suggested ways to interpret this apparent contradiction. Determining the subject positions of 'Self' and 'Other' around the discursive element of minorities proved particularly resistant to the meanings upheld by the Europeanization discourse. Tracing variations both within and across this narrative unit (in the narratives of nationhood and in the narratives on mutual recognition of minorities, respectively) confirmed this finding. The weakness of the Europeanization discourse around this discursive element not so much contradicted the discursive dynamics confirmed in the

reading of all the other elements, than pointed back to the assumption which the whole investigation started from. Europeanization needs to be able to read national identity in a credible manner because European integration occurs within the constraints of the nation-state. The discourse essentializing the nation-state as the natural organizational unit of the political world is nationalism. Its upholding centre – national identity – has historically been interpreted within nationalism in such a hegemonic manner that its most sedimented articulations proved particularly difficult to challenge in a changing discursive context.

It is not coincidental that European integration had not concerned itself with the normative regulation of national minorities for the first decades of its life. The problem of (ethno-)national minorities pertains to the discursive realm of nationalism. In no other discursive space would it represent a problem. National minorities as a discursive element are an aberration from the structuring rule of nationalism: parts of the nation left outside the nation-state borders. In order to close its totalizing space despite the aberration, the discourse of nationalism perpetually re-produces intensive practices of articulation and over-determination of the meaning of national minorities as upholding, not violating the rule. By interpreting national minorities as representing abnormality, nationalism securitizes their existence and demands special protection. Within the discourse of Europeanization, however, the discursive element of national minorities loses its meaning in view of the cancelled political relevance of nation-state borders. It ceases to represent abnormality, because all national subjects share the same common space. The issue of national minorities' special protection can therefore be taken off the political agenda. The fact that European integration did eventually approach national minorities as a problem in this sense signifies a discursive victory for nationalism. It signals increased salience of nationalist interpretations of identity.

Attempting to rectify its presumed omission and provide its own articulation of the meaning of minorities, Europeanization discourse referred to a 'European' framework of minority protection. It was based on its open, inclusive and negotiable vision of national identity. But in the context of nationalist hegemony over the discursive element, the 'European' interpretation of national minorities had questionable credibility. It had not had the time to challenge the historically sedimented narratives articulating the meaning of

national minority in a hegemonic manner. In this sense the credibility of Europeanization's reading of national identity does, indeed, depend on the discursive power of Europeanization in the particular political environment. However, in the context of EU Enlargement, the power of the Europeanization discourse is linked not only to domestic political outcomes in Europe's periphery but also to political outcomes in the discursive space of traditional Europe. To acknowledge this specificity in the discursive dynamics illustrated in Figure 6 above, it should be clarified that the credibility of Europeanization's reading of national identity is linked not only to the progress of integration as EU enlargement. It is also linked to its progress as deepening and widening integration processes within traditional Europe.

Establishing credible 'European' readings of national identity in the narratives studied in the two states is empirically linked to marginalized nationalist interpretations and re-enforced discursive power of Europeanization. To the contrary, where Europeanization discourse does not succeed in providing credible alternative interpretations of national identity signifiers, the political relevance of nationalism as hegemonic discourse is increased. The hegemonic clash between the two discourses over the same discursive space is determined by the centrality of national identity in legitimizing sovereign power. In this sense the credibility of identity interpretations has the potential to transform the political order by upholding one vision of legitimate power or another. Ultimately, this is what the future of the integration project is about.

### ***Research Contribution***

The results of this investigation of national identity in Europe contribute to expanding existing academic knowledge in three ways. In the first place, its contribution relates to the methodological novelty of the approach. The study offers an original theoretical and meta-theoretical framework, combining poststructuralist discourse theory with reflectivist strands from three academic (sub-)disciplines, whose mainstreams are widely rationalist. International Relations, European Studies and Nationalism Studies have each in their own ways approached national identity and attempted to explain its political relevance.

Constrained by the limitations of their rationalist epistemologies and of their own disciplinary agendas, however, their accounts have been challenged on many grounds: level of analysis, area focus, ontological assumptions. Looking at national identity from the cross-section of three academic fields concerned with exploring the subject of national identity, on the other hand, permits a much broader and fuller understanding. It allows for the incorporation of various theoretical approaches (securitization theory, normative theories of Europeanization, critical approaches to studying nationalism), various levels of analysis (seeing the macro-level not as a system or state level but as embedded in both the international and the domestic contexts), various qualitative methods (comparative analysis over a small number of cases carried out through discourse analysis of official publicly produced texts). Placing this investigation within the wider framework of poststructuralist discourse theory enhances existing understanding of many aspects of the political relevance of national identity in Europe and promises to open compelling new ways to studying the political phenomena associated with it.

The second contribution which this dissertation aimed to make concerns its main argument. The claim it makes about the discursive centrality of national identity in the project of Europeanization is novel and original. Because of the particular historical contexts in which the idea of integration was conceived, national identity has traditionally been relegated to the margins of European politics as anachronistically linked to the questionable ethics of nationalism. National identity's salience in Europe has therefore often been approached as an aberration from the normative space of Europeanization and interpreted in relation to the 'non-European' elements in 'Europe'. Against the recurring political salience of national identity, another analytical strand has begun to see it as incompatible with the integration project altogether, proclaiming the limits of integration. This dissertation claims, to the contrary, that national identity is a central element within the discursive space of Europeanization whose interpretation can determine the future of the European project. Inextricably linked to the notion of sovereignty in the political world of national subjects, national identity narratives never left the discursive space of 'Europe'. They were re-told in a particular way with the progress of integration and the empowerment of the Europeanization discourse, which marginalized previously dominant

nationalist interpretations. But they continued to form the basis of the interpellation of the national subjects for the purposes of political mobilization and action. Furthermore, this is not incompatible with the European idea. Quite to the contrary, it is the ability of Europeanization to uphold identities in its particular manner that stabilizes its discursive space and ensures its political relevance. Thinking about Europeanization in those terms is significant because it addresses in a novel and challenging way many of the central debates in Europeanization studies. In view of the discussion on an emerging European identity and how it relates to national identity, for example, this claim suggests that the two are neither mutually exclusive nor antagonistic. In fact, what is seen as a 'European identity' is a particular interpretation of the national identity narratives within the discursive space of 'Europe'. Questioning the limits of integration in terms of the deepening and widening dynamics is also tightly linked to this understanding of the European project. As long as it continues to produce credible readings of the national narratives, accommodating national identities in an optimistic, positive, emancipatory manner, integration can maintain its political relevance: it will provide the link between the individual and sovereign power, ensuring the legitimate basis of political action. The integration dynamics then will face no fixed limits. The study of the normative power of Europeanization and the role of the European project in Europe outside the current EU, another important discussion in Europeanization Studies, can also be seen in a new light. The hegemonic struggle between discourses of nationalism and of Europeanization is ongoing in the periphery of Europe, and as the current dissertation established in the context of EU Enlargement, its outcome is crucial for the success of integration. Outside the borders of the EU and the scope of the enlargement process, as well, the 'European' reading of national identity can have significant implications for politics in Europe and has the potential to empower the discourse of Europeanization even beyond the borders of the integration project. This is, indeed, an entirely new direction for research.

Finally, the specific regional focus of the current dissertation is an original contribution to existing academic knowledge. Among the many Balkan states, Bulgaria and Macedonia have not attracted significant academic interest because of their relative stability as compared to the (rest of the) Western Balkans. When they have been studied at all in

modern academic literature, it has often happened from a Western-European perspective detached from the specific local experiences, or in a language not readable in the 'West'. This dissertation addresses both omissions. Bulgarian-Macedonian relations, in particular, have been even more understudied. They have extensively been discussed in the respective national academic communities during the time of the totalitarian state. These discussions, outdated and tainted by the ideological struggles of the time, at present fail to provide an accurate idea of the complex layers of conflictuality which strain these relations, and an accurate understanding of the political implications of it. Freed from the ideological constraints of these traditional accounts, the current dissertation offers a modern – postmodern, in fact – approach to understanding a particular fragment of Balkan politics which has not been widely explored. Even if constrained by other ideological assumptions and unable to cross their limits, the investigation offered here is a novel contribution because its findings, made on the basis of the specific regional and historical contexts, enhance existing academic knowledge of the complex relationship between two Balkan states. It tells a 'small story' about a small part of Europe but it points to many 'bigger' stories in European politics. In this sense it opens an interesting agenda for future research.

### ***What Next?***

One of the items on this agenda concerns exploring the power of the Europeanization discourse over antagonistic politics in other regional contexts. An obvious area of interest here would be the (rest of the) Western Balkans and the post-conflict reconstruction of statehood there. Detaching the analysis from the euphoric context of the breakup of communism in Europe and its immediate normative effect on politics in the post-communist states will point to a characteristically new discursive environment in which the central argument put forward in this dissertation can be applied and explored. The change will affect the power of the Europeanization discourse, the pace of integration, and the structural features of conflictual politics.

Another important item on the research agenda opened by this dissertation represents the discursive effect of Europeanization over the re-narration of national identity along the relations between a EU member state and a non-member state. The investigation offered here was able to establish decreased conflictuality and reduced divisive potential of national identity narratives re-told within the discourse of Europeanization. But its methodological frame did not allow including the period after Bulgaria's joining the EU. Studying the way conflictuality evolves in the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic of identity narration from the more advantageous position of a member of the Community, and particularly with regard to a non-member, would add important insights to further developing the argument presented here. This is significant because antagonistic politics is not a prerogative of states outside the EU. The Greek position on Macedonia in that same context of Balkan politics is an illustration. Thus, studying the effect of Europeanization over antagonistic national identity narratives in Bulgarian-Macedonian relations after 2007, and perhaps in comparison with Greek-Macedonian relations, is a logical next step in the research agenda proposed by this dissertation.

The implications of membership in the Community in view of the post-communist Enlargements is in itself a central problem on the research agenda of Europeanization Studies and one to which the findings of this investigation relate to. Membership preparation and joining not only affected the way national identity was being upheld in the respective national communities. It also affected the way the supranational community was being imagined and sustained as a politically viable project. Opening up to Europe's previous 'Others' radically transformed the way the EC/EU had captured and accommodated the key discursive element of 'national interest'. It challenged the existing balance between commonality and difference and destabilized the hegemony of the Europeanization discourse altogether. Exploring the 'Self'-'Other' dialectic inside the supranational community, therefore, appears, in view of this dissertation's main argument, as an imperative to understanding the current dynamics of European integration. This dialectic seems to have implications for the widening of the integration process, for the sustainability of enlargement of the community, for the nature of the neighbourhood

policies on the European continent, as well as for EU's outreach beyond the borders of Europe.

Pointing to this exciting research agenda, the current dissertation aimed to make its contribution by framing a much repeated concept – national identity – into an original research context and analyzing it in a novel and challenging way.





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